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March 2003

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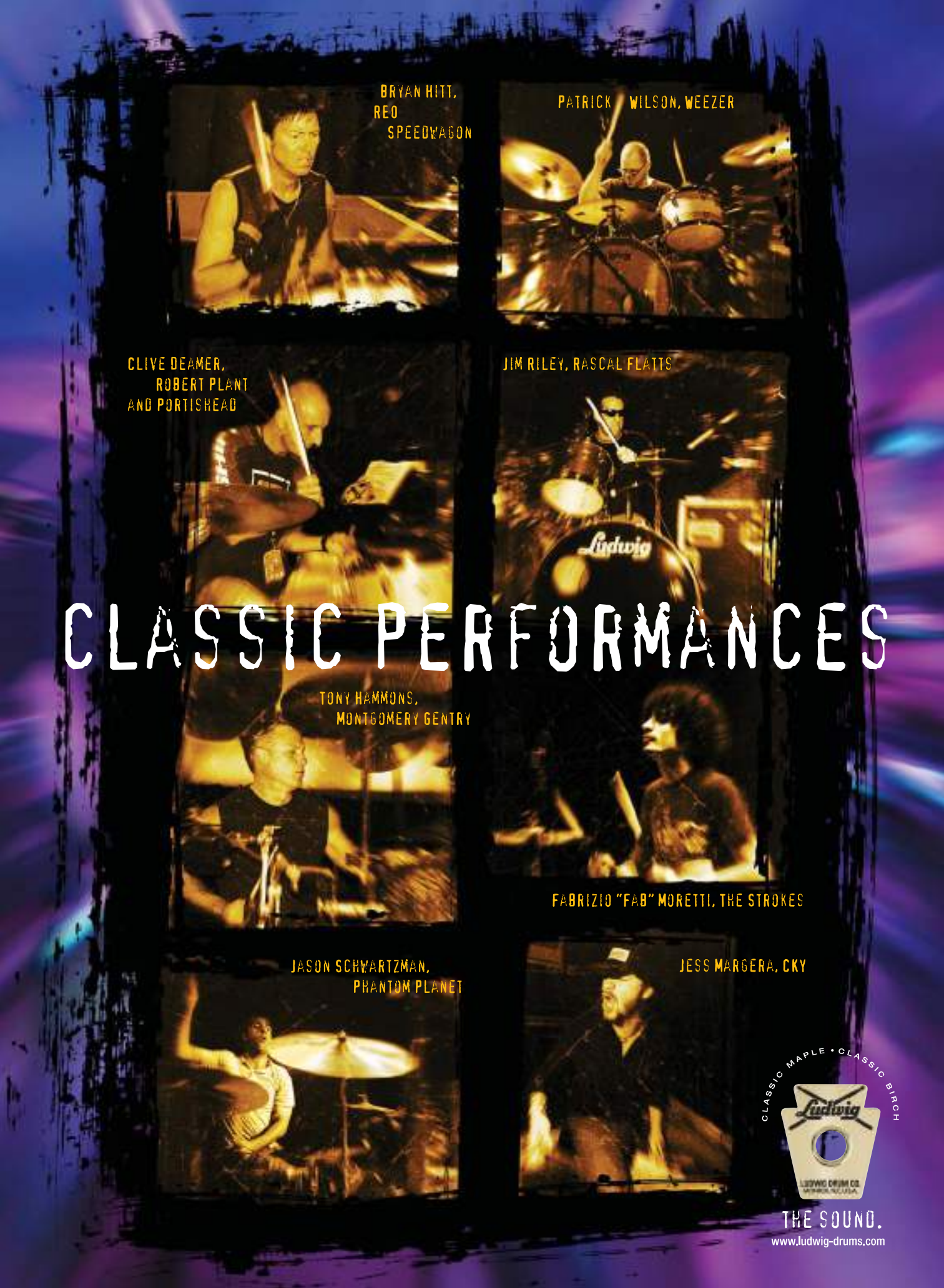
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Inset photo by Paul La Raia

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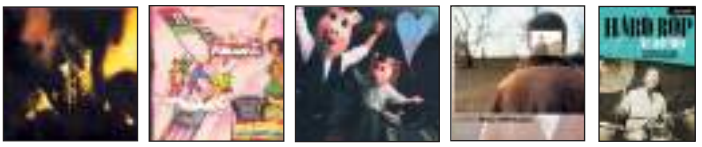

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"if this looks good to you,

Amun series cymbals are computer hammered from B8 Bronze. Loud enough for modern rock, but with low, warm undertones.

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Protect Yourself

Most people wouldn't consider drumming a high-risk job. We're not firefighters, high-steel construction workers, coal miners, or any other jobholders who literally face the risk of serious injury or death on a daily basis. But that doesn't mean we're free from hazards.

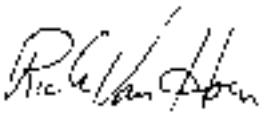
Many of us spend a lot of time driving to and from gigs—often very late at night, when we're fatigued and when many other drivers are coming home from a night of drinking. So being involved in a traffic accident is a very real possibility. Those of us who spend a lot of time "on the road" find ourselves performing in cities where no one knows anything about us. If we were to suffer a medical emergency while on a gig or in our hotel room, it's possible that no one would be able to provide our health history to emergency personnel.

Any serious medical emergency is compounded by the risk of improper medical care. I'm not talking about malpractice or negligence. I have great respect for the medical profession, and I believe that doctors and paramedics do an amazing job at saving people's lives every day. But to do that, they need complete information about their patients.

MD received a letter recently from a drummer who suffers from epilepsy. In it, he described a frightening incident in which he suffered a seizure. Responding paramedics mistakenly interpreted his seizure as symptomatic of substance abuse. He was taken to a local emergency room, where he received no further treatment.

The late Larrie Londin suffered a heart attack while conducting a clinic at the University of North Texas in 1992. Rumor has it that his condition was worsened by the inadvertent administration of medication that his body could not tolerate because he was diabetic. The story is made more tragic because Larrie supposedly wore a "Medic Alert" bracelet identifying his condition, but had removed it while playing at his clinic.

You might not suffer from such severe medical conditions. But you might be asthmatic. You might have allergies to medication. You might have food sensitivities that could prove fatal if you could not inform medical personnel about them. Remember, when you're away from home and family—on the road, at a local club, or just driving home from a wedding gig—you *are* at risk for medical emergencies. If you have *any* condition that affects the care you should receive, obtain appropriate "Medic Alert" identification, and wear it at all times. It's inexpensive, easy to wear, and vital to your own self-protection.



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Santana Rhythm Section

It was an absolute pleasure to read your December cover feature on the current Santana rhythm section. What was especially enjoyable was the sincerity with which Dennis Chambers, Raul Rekow, and Karl Perazzo expressed their admiration for each other. I also appreciated how they described the way they make music together by *listening* to each other. To hear a legitimate percussion legend like Raul Rekow say, "We complement each other. I don't mind taking a back seat...." is an education within two sentences. It points out why the greatest drumming stars are also the most musical drummers. It's simply because they put the music first, and *then* lend their own unique contributions. The outcome speaks for itself.

Arthur Franklin
San Diego, CA

Pat Wilson

I find it interesting that even a player as accomplished as Weezer's Pat Wilson still suffers from confidence hang-ups, just like ordinary, everyday drummers. Admittedly, it must be intimidating for a meat-and-potatoes rock drummer to grace the pages of *MD* alongside technicians like Dennis Chambers, Terry Bozzio, and Bill Stewart. But I hope Pat realizes that the work he did on all the Weezer albums made the music come alive. His profoundly simple and effective playing on the "blue" CD made me re-evaluate my own playing, and helped me reduce some of the superfluous fills and show-off hi-hat stuff I was doing. That, in turn, helped me focus on the truly important things, like sacrificing my ego for the song.

Thank you, Pat, for your inspiration, and for being in one of the coolest bands out there. Don't go changing.

Geoff Hicks
Vancouver, BC, Canada

Cyrus Bolooki

fers broken bones in his arm and back while on tour—and then gets right back into playing within weeks—has my vote for sheer determination. So kudos to Cyrus Bolooki on that score. Now I'm intrigued enough to check out his playing with NFG. Thanks for the enlightening story.

Paul Salisbury
via Internet

MD Consumer Poll Results

Thank you for the great news about Roland's winning three categories in *Modern Drummer*'s 2002 Consumer Poll. On behalf of everyone at Roland Corporation, please know how much we appreciate this vote of confidence from *MD*'s readers. This will certainly be good news for the entire team of talented engineers and percussionists who have worked so hard to create Roland's entire lineup of electronic percussion products. Thanks again for this special recognition.

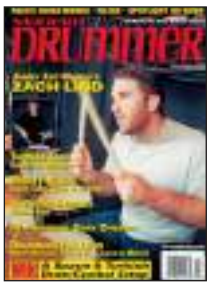
Dennis Houlihan
President, Roland Corp. US
Los Angeles, CA

All of us here were thrilled to receive the news of *Modern Drummer*'s 2002 Consumer Poll results. There is no greater honor than to be recognized by your readers and our consumers. While we will savor the moment, rest assured that we look at this as a responsibility to keep building for the future.

David McAllister
President, Latin Percussion, Inc.
Garfield, NJ

Steve Gillis

Thanks for featuring Steve Gillis in the November *Update*. Steve is a tremendous talent. He's versatile, he can groove like nobody's business, and he's brimming with chops—which he knows when *not* to use.



I'm a former student of Steve, having sought his help to better my technique after I'd already been playing for a few years. He was a careful teacher, paying attention to the

Credit Where It's Due

A few years ago, I got a call for a session. Two writer friends of mine had five songs, and only three days in which to record the basic tracks before the "name" artist was to arrive, approve the songs, and record his tracks on them. The songs were demos for the artist's upcoming album, and the plan was to have his band re-record the keepers. The writers had used all the local studio regulars, but nothing seemed to have the spark they were looking for. I was actually the first choice of one of them, but I didn't have the track record to impress the artist. So I didn't get the call until late in the game.

With the help of Mike Porcaro on bass, we tracked four of the songs. The writers were very pleased—and relieved. The fifth song featured Gregg Bissonette. I told the writers that I couldn't improve anything, and that they should leave it—to which they agreed. Later that week, the artist arrived and was blown away by the tracks. He insisted that they be kept, and that no re-recording was necessary. Needless to say, I was honored. The writers were K.C. Porter and J.B. Eckl, the artist was Carlos Santana, and the album was *Supernatural*.

Ego is normally something I leave on the stage. But after reading the "incomplete" list of Santana drummers in your December *Different View* piece with Carlos, my ego was bruised for the last time as far as that album is concerned. I could be wrong, but I believe that if you add my name to that list, it's complete.

I am credited on the album. I got paid. I even met Carlos, which was very cool. But after twenty-three years I guess I'm tired of being "the best drummer that nobody knows." Yes, more of your readers know Gregg's name or Carter Beauford's name. But who is Billy "Shoes" Johnson? He's a man who works hard, plays great, and deserves the respect and credit he gets for his work. My point is, we all do.

James Keegan
Phillips Ranch, CA

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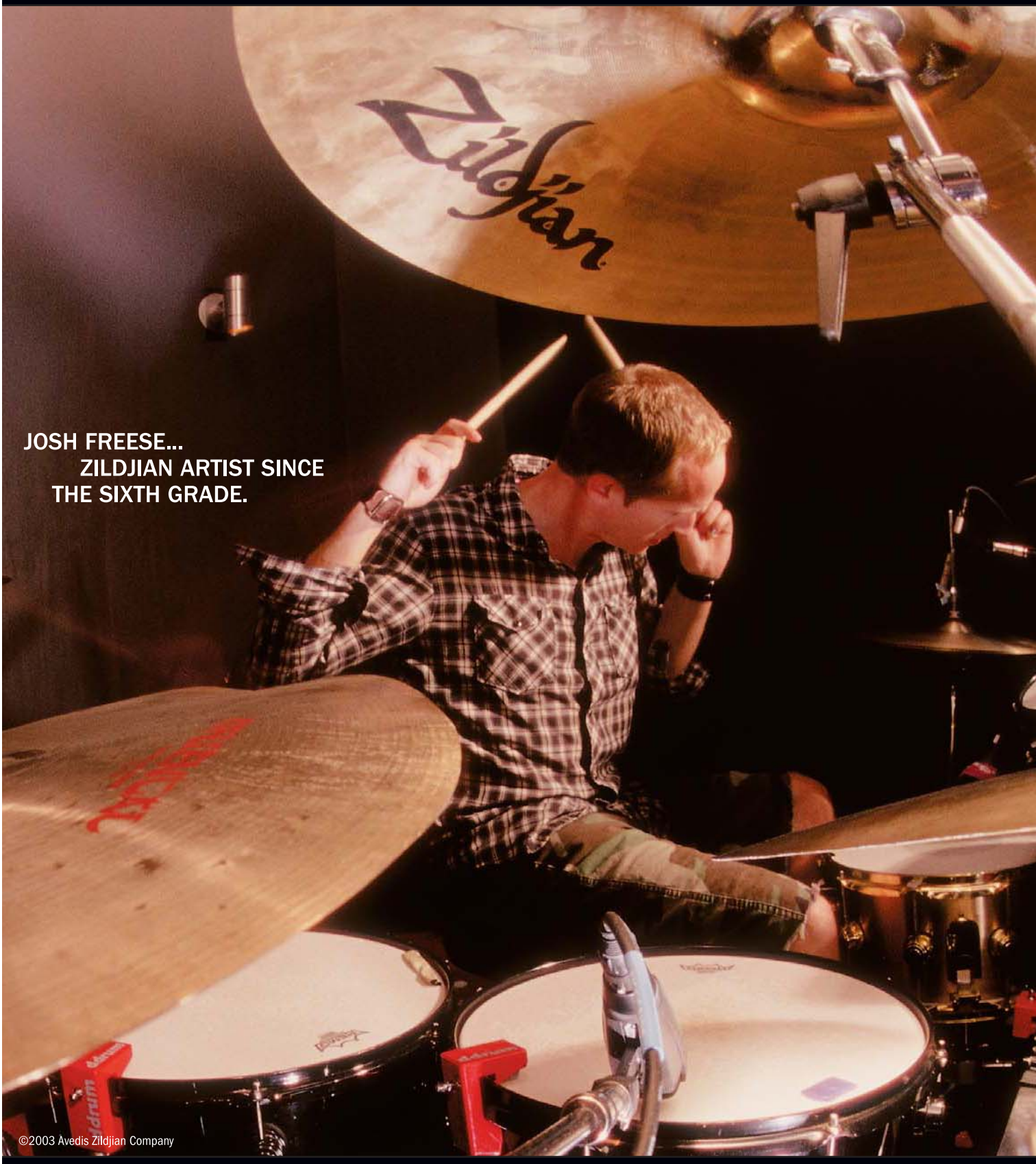

JOSH FREESE...
ZILDJIAN ARTIST SINCE
THE SIXTH GRADE.

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Readers' Platform

smallest detail. For example, he visited my house for the first lesson and made sure that my kit was set up in a way that maximized balance and minimized effort. Beyond drumming technicalities, Steve also turned me on to a lot of great music, got me into his gigs with his fusion band, and also checked out my playing at my gigs. In short, he was a drumming mentor of uncommon caliber. As a result, my playing improved dramatically in a very short period of time.

Steve's performance on Filter's *Amalgamut* is powerful and smooth, with more opportunities for his awesome ability to shine than on *Title Of Record*. He's definitely someone to keep an eye on.

Michael Lorber
Stony Brook, NY

Thanks To Greg

I'm a woman who sometimes gets very frustrated with my drumming skills. Fortunately, I've had the benefit of a personal inspiration: Greg Upchurch from Puddle Of Mudd.

The day came when the band rolled into town and I went to their concert—not knowing that my life would change forever. I saw Greg perform, and I was in total awe. He plays with such power, it just mesmerizes you. After the show I met Greg, and he took the time to talk to me and give me some great drumming tips.

Meeting Greg gave me the push I needed and the confidence that I didn't have. I can never repay him, but I *can* say "Thanks!"

Lisa D'Andrea
Phoenix, AZ

How To Reach Us

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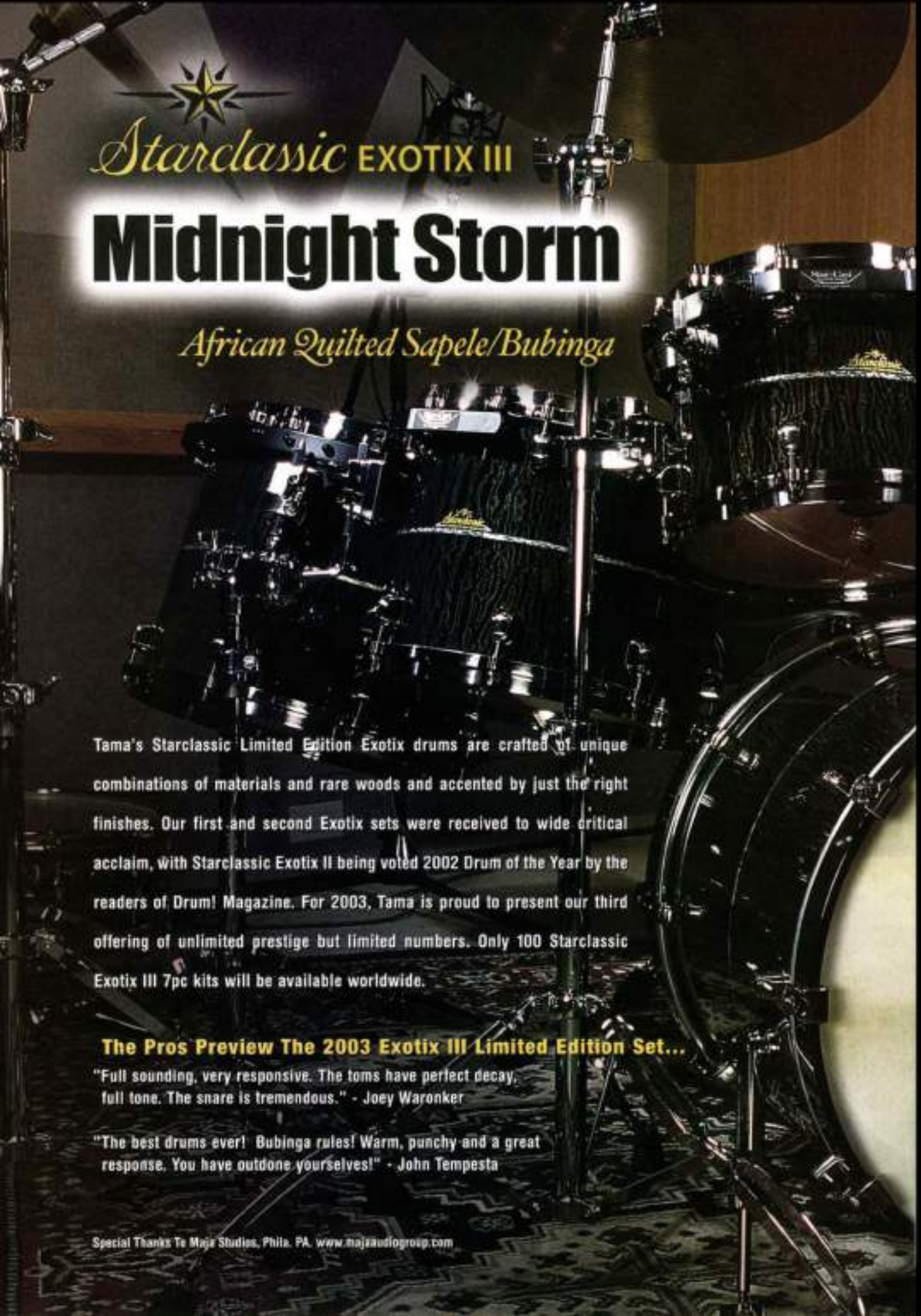
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Jimmy DeGrasso's Hero Setup

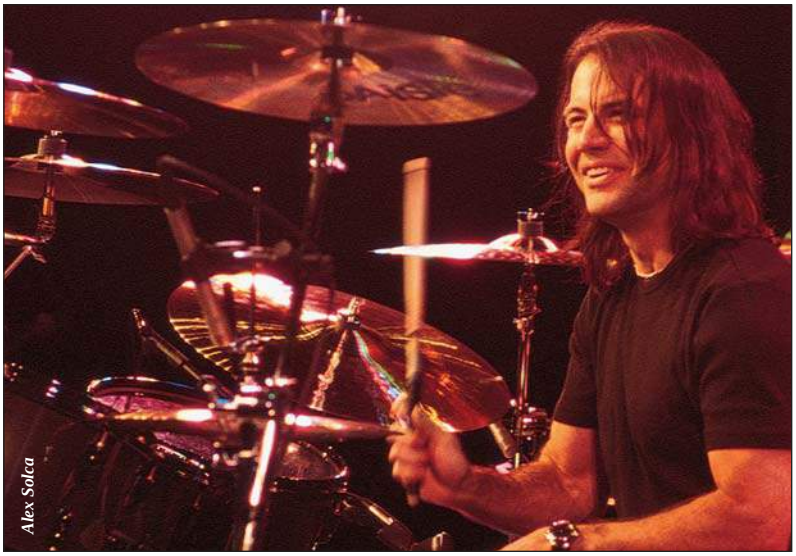
Q First, let me say that you are my inspiration. Your chops are just sick! What do you recommend for warming up? Also, please outline the drum and cymbal setup you used on Megadeth's *The World Needs A Hero*. That's a truly great recording!

drummerdude020
via Internet

A As far as warming up is concerned, I like to use a practice pad or play on a towel in the dressing room. I usually run through a few rudiments for about ten minutes before a show. I also like to stretch out a bit. It depends on how long I've been touring. If I've been touring a lot it usually doesn't take very long to get warmed up.

I'm glad you enjoyed *The World Needs A Hero*. For those sessions I used a Pearl MHX mahogany kit consisting of two 18x22 bass drums, 8x10, 9x12, and 11x14 mounted toms, and 14x16 and 16x18 floor toms. I used quite a few snare drums, including a Pearl Free Floating piccolo, several 6½x14 Ludwig Black Beauties, a 6½x14 Pearl Masterworks birch snare, a 5x14 Ayotte Keplinger stainless-steel snare, and a 6½x14 Pearl mahogany snare. I used clear Evans G1s on the tops and bottoms of the toms, EQ4s on the bass drums, and coated Power Centers on the snare drums.

My cymbals were all Paistes. From my left to my right, they included a 19" Signature Full Crash, an 18" Signature Power Crash, 14" Signature Heavy Hi-Hats, a 10" Signature Splash, an 18" 2002 Medium Crash, a 20" Signature Power Ride, a 19" Signature Power Crash, 15" 2002 Sound Edge Hi-Hats (closed), a 17" Signature Full Crash, and a 20" Signature Heavy China.


Alex Solca

Ralph Hardimon On Traditional Grip

Q I'm currently practicing my butt off in hopes of making the Big 8 drumline at Florida State University. I'm using your Vic Firth Corpsmaster signature sticks, and I'm playing on a 10" Remo practice pad with fairly loose tension. The theory behind this is that I have to work for each stroke, and thus build consistency between both hands.

I've been working on my traditional grip a lot. I'm noticing that my left elbow is in closer to my side than my right elbow is, and I'm experiencing slight pain in that elbow. Could this be because I'm just out of shape? Might I expect it to go away as I gradually get into shape? I surely don't want to do any damage to myself.

Nic
via Internet

A First let me say thanks for choosing my signature stick. Next, I'm very happy to offer some thoughts about your questions and concerns. Let's start with the left elbow. With traditional grip, it's natural for the left elbow to be closer to the body than the right. When you just pick up a pair of sticks with traditional grip and don't think about anything else, this is where the elbow sits naturally. So you're off to a good start.

The pain in the elbow could be from gripping the stick a bit too tightly. This can cause the muscles in the arm to tighten up, which in turn can begin to irritate the elbow—especially if you play fast-paced material before properly warming up. You want to avoid playing with any tension. In a lot of cases, the pain will eventually go away as you learn to play more relaxed. From a drumming standpoint, good slow exercises can really help. Think like a weightlifter or a runner: Start out slow, with stretches to prepare the muscles to take on more weight and speed. If it does hurt, a good warm-*down*—again playing slowly—will help after some aggressive playing.

Be careful while playing on soft practice-pad surfaces. Sometimes the lack of rebound will cause you to grip the stick too tightly while trying to pull it off the pad surface. Once again, this will put a strain on the muscles in the arm. Lastly, be sure that your arm muscles are not damaged from some other activity. Perhaps you've strained that elbow somehow other than drumming. Don't ever ignore pain or assume it will go away. Make sure you know *why* the pain is occurring, so that you can take appropriate action.

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Mark Schulman's Sonic Variety

Q I watched your performance with Cher on the Showtime *Divas In Vegas* special, and it dawned on me that I'd also seen you perform last year on Stevie Nicks' tour. In both cases I was thoroughly impressed with your playing ability and unique style. But what causes me to write is your ability to get completely different drum sounds without changing drumkits. I'd guess that you employ triggers to generate other sounds, and I'm sure there are some effects used to create, enhance, and modify your drum sounds. But from seeing and hearing you play, I feel it has to go deeper that that. For example, Stevie and Cher each perform songs from entirely different musical eras. On every song I saw you perform, the snare and kick drum particularly seemed to jump back in sound ten or more years, to right where they belonged. How in the heck is that done?

Thomas A. Conley
via Internet

A Wow, Tom, you pay great attention to detail. Thanks for the awareness and support. I'm a man dedicated to the nurturing and preservation of the Diva. So I do my best to maintain the integrity of the original qualities of all music I play on stage, yet combine it with a bit of my own signature. I consider it an honor to be able to re-create the great drumming performances of my idols, like Mick Fleetwood, Hal Blaine, Jeff Porcaro, Russ Kunkel, Kenny Aronoff, Mike Derosier, and even Tico Torres. These are a few of the guys who played on the four decades' worth of recordings by Cher, Stevie Nicks, Sheryl Crow, Heart, Melissa Etheridge, Destiny's Child, and other famous ladies that I've had the great pleasure to perform with on stage.

The variation of drum sound is the result of three primary components: technique, note placement (groove), and tuning. A drummer can get ten to fifteen distinct sounds out of the same snare drum by playing the drum in the center, below the center, to the left or right of center, playing these same areas with and without rimshots, playing the backbeats with the butt end of the stick, or by playing the strokes *fff* (very loud), *mf* (medium volume) or *p* (quietly).

I also do things to the drums themselves. For a great '70s ballad sound, I'll put some muffling on the snare drum (usually a 1"-diameter ring that I cut out of an old head), then play with the butt end of the stick in the middle of the drum, with no rimshots. Laying the beat back (slightly delaying the backbeat) can give an even heavier, fatter feel to the music—thus creating an illusion of a deeper-sounding drum.

To get a twangy/ringy/'90s alt-rock sound for an up-tempo rocker on the same drum, I may pull the muffling ring off of the drum and play with rimshots just left of center, to get as much ring out of the drum as I can.

Particularly with the Cher gig, I have to accurately emulate four decades of wonderful drumming with one kit. So I tune the snare to a medium pitch and use the techniques described above to achieve the desired variation—in order to please discerning drum dudes like you. I also try to pick a snare drum that responds well to these variations. On the Stevie Nicks/Sheryl Crow gig, I selected the Mapex $5\frac{1}{2}$x14 Cherry Deep Forest snare. For the Cher gig, my tech, Gary Grimm, and I go back and forth between the aforementioned drum and the $5\frac{1}{2}$x14 Maple Black Panther snare.

For the kick drum, I either use a nice feather pillow or my buddy Scott Crago's DW drum pillow inside the drum, depending on how much dampening I need. But Tom, I gotta say that the only variation I have for the bass drum during a live show is dynamics and note placement. I can't manipulate the tuning on that drum the way I can on the snare. So I think you perceive a change in sound because the snare sound changes and the feel changes! Thanks for the interest. Let me know how these suggestions work for you.

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Reversing Hi-Hat Cymbals

Q Is it a good idea to put the bottom hi-hat cymbal on top? I've heard that this can lead to breakage, but I like the sound it produces. Any input you can provide would be appreciated.

Kyle Middleton
via Internet

A In a "standard" configuration, the heavier of the two hi-hat cymbals is usually placed on the bottom. Putting that cymbal on the top tends to produce a higher-pitched, brighter, more defined—and generally louder—stick sound. Since the cymbal is heavier, there's no reason to think that it would be more prone to breakage under stick impact than the original "top" cymbal would be. And although there might be a bit more pressure on the "new" bottom cymbal when the hi-hat is closed with the foot (owing to the heavier cymbal now being on top), that pressure is distributed around the circumference of the cymbal, rather than impacting it in any one place. So again, there should be little or no risk of damage.

Slingerland Drums

Q I own a seven-piece 1975 Slingerland Concorde Series drumkit with a copper finish. I'd like to make inquiries about finding accessories for these drums. I'd like to keep my kit original with Slingerland hardware. Is there a Web site or dealer that carries vintage drum and accessories for Slingerland drums?

I'm particularly looking to replace the original bass-drum-mounted tom-tom holder, which does not adjust the drums independently. I know Slingerland did offer an upgraded adjustable holder. I believe it was made available on their Magnum Series drums. It looks similar to most of today's hardware, like Yamaha's or Sonor's.

Also, I know the drumshells are 6 mm in thickness. But I'm curious to know how many plies were in each shell.

Tony Colalillo
via Internet

Using A Woofer

Q I recently purchased a DW bass drum Woofer, and I'm having problems getting the maximum sound quality. The microphone inside the Woofer tends to feed back, and it doesn't give me the punch I'm looking for. I've tried using multiple microphones to achieve that "perfect" sound, but I'm not sure if I need to. Also, I've noticed many drummers using the mounting kit to connect the Woofer to their bass drum. Is this necessary?

Ben Pischke
via Internet

A We forwarded your question to DW vice president and drum designer John Good. He replies, "Ben, The Woofer was not developed to provide snap on the top end of your kick drum sound, nor does it provide any kind of attack. In fact, it's not meant to be the primary source of bass drum amplification. What the Woofer *was* designed to do is add an extreme yet almost transparent bottom end to your kick drum sound. This kind of sound is felt more than heard. To achieve this end, let's first make sure your Woofer is set up and tuned properly.

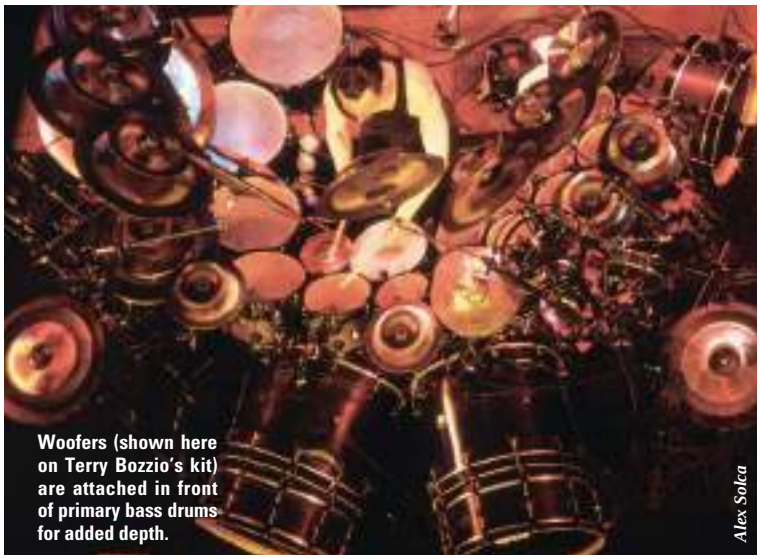
"A good starting point is to tune the Woofer as low as you can without allowing any wrinkles on either head. (If you wish to influence the primary kick drum sound, you can tune the Woofer up from here later. But let's just get it going first.) The Audio-Technica ATM 25 microphone that was shipped with the drum should be rotated towards the front (resonant) head. Check to make sure the little pillow inside the drum is touching both heads.

"Judging from your comments about feedback, you may have been using the Woofer to attain bass drum volume, and not independently miking your primary bass drum. That is *not* what the Woofer is designed for. You *do* need to mike the primary bass drum, just as you would if you were not using a Woofer at all. (By the way, the May internal system is great for the purpose of miking your bass drum while making it possible to get the Woofer as close to or as far from your front bass drum head as you wish.)

"Why do we care how close or far the Woofer is from the kick drum? Because the Woofer reacts to energy generated by your bass drum. There is a wonderful 'sweet spot' that starts at about 4" to 5" between the Woofer and the kick drum, where everything really starts to work. I don't recommend putting the Woofer too close to the front bass drum head, because doing so creates a reflective bounce of the sound that isn't very appealing.

"There is a cradle provided for the Woofer to sit in if you are not connecting it to the kick drum. Some players like it connected with rods on either side of the drums for convenience of support and positioning (sliding it back and forth on the rods).

"Your Woofer didn't come with any instructions, so I can imagine it's confusing to get things right. I'll work on that with future models. In the meantime, I hope this information is enough to get you going."



Woofers (shown here on Terry Bozzio's kit) are attached in front of primary bass drums for added depth. *Alex Solca*

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A According to *MD* drum historian Harry Cangany, "To answer your last question first, the drums were five plies. As to your tom holder, if the kit is from 1975, it came with Set-O-Matic hardware. (The Magnum series came in the '80s.) You have the basic twin-tom mount. Try to locate a Super Set-O Matic model, which has two short adjustable arms held in a larger, angle-adjustable base. The mounting bracket that holds it to the bass drum shell uses the same hole pattern as the bracket you have. (I always hate to see vintage items re-drilled.)

"*Modern Drummer*'s ads are filled with vintage drum and parts dealers to contact. And there is always eBay for contacting private parties. Good luck in your search."

Tom Mounts On Bass Drums

Q Why do some drum setups in the interviews and ads featured in your magazine show "rack" toms mounted on stands instead of on the bass drum? Does the tube penetration of a bass-drum tom mount affect the sound of the bass drum that much? Stewart Copeland made good music with his blue Tama Imperialstars with such a feature, as did Virgil Donati when he was with Premier. On the other hand, I know DW's tom-mounting system has no tube penetration of any shells. It just seems to me that toms mounted on stands cause more clutter on the floor. Is avoiding that hole in the bass drum shell such a concern?

Simon Wang
via Internet

A Some drummers—and some drum manufacturers—feel that a tube that penetrates a bass drum shell (or any drumshell, for that matter) reduces the sonic performance of that shell. So for those drummers, it's very important to have a non-penetrating mount, or to put the "rack" toms on a separate stand or on a drum rack.

For other drummers, it's mainly a matter of positioning comfort. Sometimes it isn't possible to get one's toms precisely where one wants them if they are mounted on the bass drum. Keeping the toms and the bass drum separate allows more flexibility of positioning. The "clutter" on the floor is a trade-off for that flexibility. Many drummers avoid such clutter by using a drum rack to mount their toms and cymbals.

Gaining Speed With Control

Q I've been playing drums about seven years, and there are still a few things I can't understand about my own playing. I have great speed, but my control is definitely not as good as I want it to be. I practice rudiments, and they make me feel more in control at times. But when I attempt to speed up, it's like my sticks have minds of their own. Can you suggest an exercise or two to help me become more controlled and more confident with my fast drumming?

Joshua
via Internet

A The way to develop more control at high speed is first to develop control—period. That usually means starting at slower speeds, and then working *up* to the faster tempos, maintaining control along the way.

Take your practice exercises down several clicks on your metronome. (You *must* practice with a timekeeping aid.) Work on the exercises until you feel that you have complete control over your execution, timekeeping, and musicality. Then bump up the tempo slightly. Repeat the process.

It takes a little time, but the benefit will be that you will feel "in control" at *all* tempos, from slow to fast. Remember, all music isn't played at breakneck speed. And even the music that *is* must be kept fluid and, as you say, under control. Otherwise, it ceases to groove, and that immediately loses the rest of the band—and the audience.

Warlord CD

Q Your recent *Update* on Mark Zonder mentions a new CD from Warlord called *Rising Out Of The Ashes*. But the article does not mention a release date, record label, or catalog number. I was unable to locate the CD at my local record store. Do you have any additional info on this release?

Don LeMay
via Internet

A You can order the CD online at www.warlord.ws.

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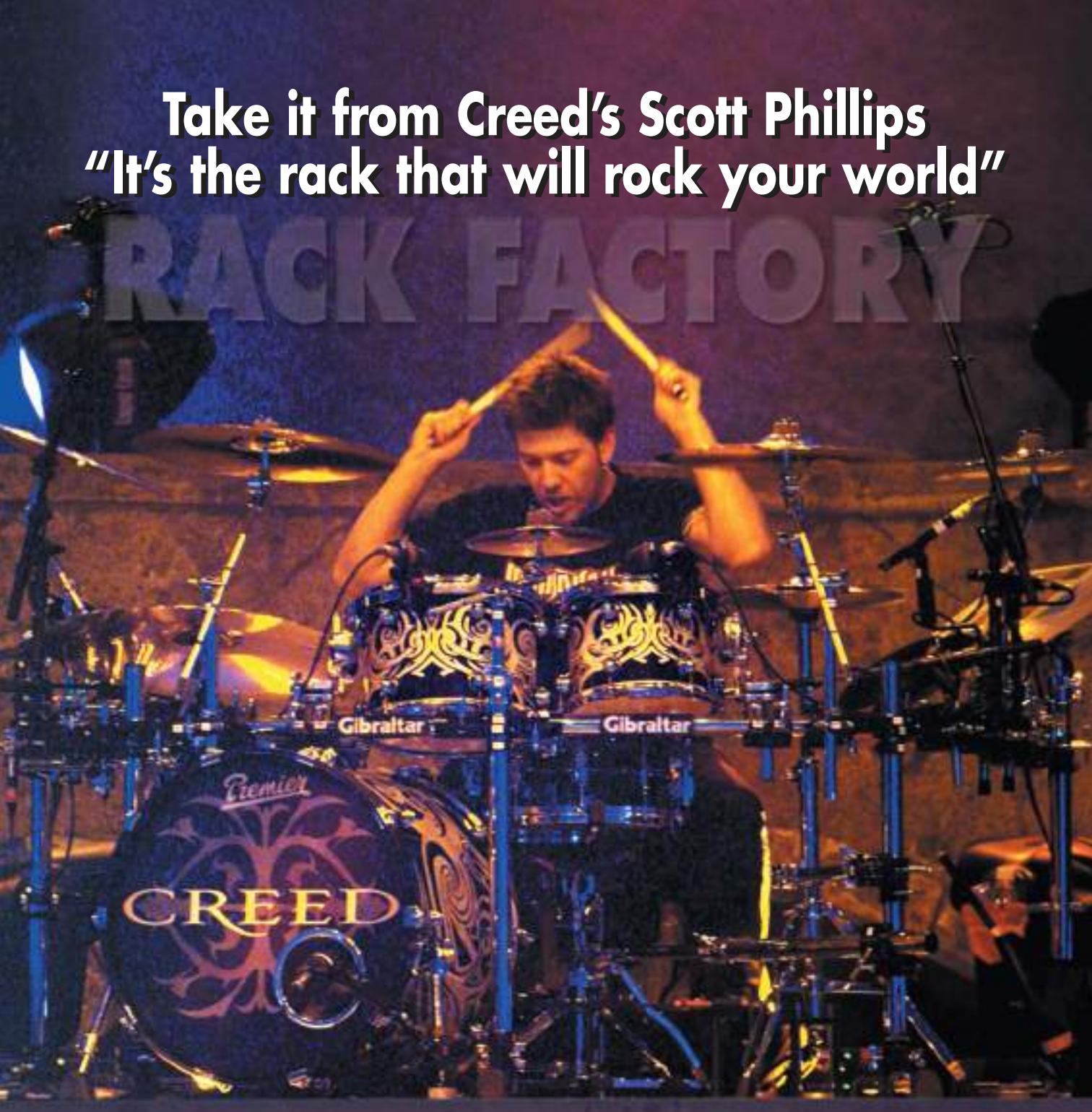

Scott Phillips' day planner typically looks something like this: January–March, play to over a million fans at arenas throughout North America. April & May, over to Australia, New Zealand and Europe. Next, back to the U.S. for a Summer/Fall stadium tour.

That's a lot of gigging. That's a lot of wear and tear on gear. And that's why Scott insists on a Gibraltar rack.

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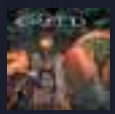

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Phil Collins

Testifying On And Off The Drums

Phil Collins' first studio album in six years, *Testify*, is another brilliant collection of pop songs, textures, and sounds from the singer/composer/drummer/producer, who still considers himself—first and foremost—a drummer.

When last we spoke, two years ago, Collins was about to embark on a big band tour, which unfortunately had to be cancelled due to Phil's being diagnosed with sudden deafness syndrome. "I was recording two or three songs for possible inclusion on a love-song compilation I was doing," Phil says. "But at the end of the week, my ear closed up two or three times during the course of an evening. I couldn't hear. I went to a doctor, and he told me I had sudden deafness syndrome, which the medical world knows very little about. It has nothing to do with music or age. They told me it's just random bad luck."

After having received a second opinion about his condition, Collins was given cortisone injections. He was told that if this treatment didn't help, he would just have to wait to see how things worked out. "It's been a couple of years now," Phil says, "and I have about thirty percent comprehension. Gradually your brain adjusts and compensates to the extent that you can work."

Amazingly, Collins hasn't allowed his hearing loss to slow him down. "I've written loads of music," he says, "a lot of it for the new Disney film I'm working on." Phil is talking about *Brother Bear*, which will hit theaters in about a year. *Brother Bear* follows Collins' Oscar-, Golden Globe-, and Grammy-winning soundtrack to the hit movie *Tarzan*. (Phil is also writing new material for a stage version of *Tarzan*, not to mention the music for *Tarzan II*, a direct-to-DVD release for Disney.) As for his drumming, Collins assures us that once these deadlines are met, he will resurrect his big band project.

For now, though, bringing *Testify* to the public is a priority. For a multitude of reasons, Collins took his time making the album. And some of the songs were in the making over many years. "It wasn't until I started working with the computer that I was able to develop those bits into songs," he says. "But their lives started way back. Frankly, I didn't really want to make an album before now, because I didn't want to be pressured into going on tour because of my ear problems. Also, my wife had a baby, Nicholas, and I didn't want to drag him around the world."

The very enchanting and rhythmic "Come With Me" was born way back during Collins' *But Seriously* tour, from a riff that he sang to his now thirteen-year-old daughter when she was a baby. "We were in Japan," Phil recalls, "on the way to Tokyo, when she should have been in bed. The poor thing obviously had jet lag, so I sang that little riff to her to get her to go to sleep. Then a couple of years ago, my baby goddaughter was over at the house and wouldn't sleep, so I sang the riff to her. Then she pressed her ear to my mouth…wow…I knew I had to do something with it."

The album's recording process (done in France and Switzerland, where Collins resides) took only six weeks, aided and abetted by computers. "I approached these songs from a songwriter point of view," Phil says, "not from a drummer point of view. If a song sounds better with a machine part that I've had as a 'placeholder,' then it'll stay that way.

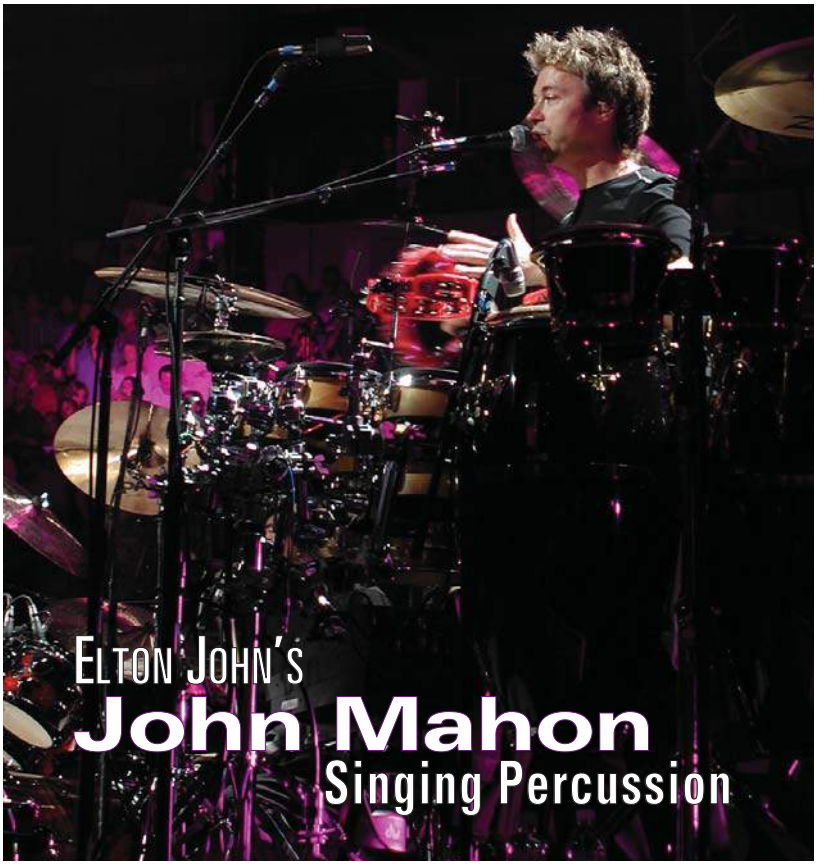
"I haven't got a drumkit in my studio," Phil continues. "I have one in my house, where I practice with my big band project. But in my little studio, I usually just set up a programmed part for the moment. But sometimes that part becomes integral to the atmosphere of the song. The classic example of that is the 'In The Air Tonight' thing where, if I'd played drums instead of a drum machine, it would have been a totally different song. It's the hypnotic, relentless, unchanging thing that a machine works well for."

That's all well and good, but doesn't the world-class drummer feel the need to have drums on his album? "Only insomuch as they serve the song," Collins asserts. "I'd say that on this record it's probably fifty-fifty, live or programmed drums. On 'It's Not Too Late,' the hi-hat is real, but the rest of it isn't. On 'Come With Me,' real drums come in at the end. 'Don't Get Me Started' is all live drums. 'Testify' is seventy-five percent live drums. 'Wake Up Call' is all programmed drums. If I feel I'm adding to the musical side of it by playing live drums, then I'll do it, gladly. But just because I'm a drummer doesn't mean I feel so precious about it that I have to play them. I realize that might seem sacrilegious to other drummers reading this, but I feel as a *songwriter*, I have to do whatever serves the song best."

Last summer, Collins found the time to serve as "house drummer" for the Queen's Jubilee concert at Buckingham Palace. "I was in London for two weeks," he says, "rehearsing and being in a band again with the guys, with Ray Cooper playing percussion. We looked at each other every day and said, 'You call this work?' One by one, the artists would come in and we'd rehearse with them. I got a chance to play with Queen, Joe Cocker, Eric Clapton, Tom Jones, Ozzy Osbourne—it was *great*." You can check out Phil's performance at that event on the recently released live set, *Party At The Palace* (Virgin).

When asked what it was like backing Ozzy, Collins laughed, "I realized that it's not easy to play 'Paranoid.' Playing the concert was great fun, and I got letters afterwards, one from my early hero, Brian Bennett of The Shadows, who said he hadn't seen someone having such fun playing drums like that in years."

Robyn Flans



Elton John's John Mahon
Singing Percussion

John Mahon loves working with Elton John. He got the gig in 1997, originally to supply simple percussion parts and background vocals. Over the years, though, his percussion rig has grown. "I'm not trying to duplicate what Ray Cooper did with Elton," Mahon says, referring to the pop superstar's long-time percussionist. "Try to fill Ray's shoes? I don't think so. But I want to bring what I do to the table."

Being a percussionist and a vocalist has its own challenges, including how to sing and use a large setup at the same time. "I had to design my setup so I could always be focused around my microphone," Mahon says. "Vocals are so important. I've been lucky in that singing has always been a door to work for me. I've never gotten into a band situation where someone didn't ask me to sing. I tell every musician, if they can, they should learn to sing."

The gig with Elton involves some electronics and standard percussion as well, and Mahon plays both with aplomb and style. "Of course, a lot of the music is basic congas, plus a lot of tambourine parts and shakers," says Mahon, who adds that he loves playing along with veteran Elton John drummer Nigel Olsson. "Some of my favorite songs in the world are songs we play," Mahon says, "like 'Levon,' 'Tiny Dancer,' and 'Don't Let The Sun Go Down.' And Nigel helped *make* those songs with his drum parts. He has his own style, and it's so easy to play around him. He gives me a lot of opportunities to play. And when he's getting into his fills, I let him go."

In his spare time, Mahon has enjoyed producing some commercials in his home studio with Elton bassist Bob Birch, as well as doing some session work as a drummer and/or singer. Mahon admits, though, that he rarely has time for that these days, because Elton tours so much. "This gig is a sheer joy," he says enthusiastically. "I wouldn't trade it for anything. To work with a superstar like this and to play such great music is unbelievable."

Robyn Flans

Jim Keltner
Playing For A Friend

I always knew Jim Keltner was a busy man. Why wouldn't he be? Just about *everyone* wants him for something—a record date, a live gig, an interview, etc. The day we spoke about the highly anticipated George Harrison record, *Brainwashed*, Jim was getting ready to sit in with his good friend Charlie Watts and The Rolling Stones when they were playing LA. "Charlie called me when they got to town and said, 'Come down to the show and play some percussion with us on a song,'" Jim says nonchalantly.

During the previous few weeks, Keltner was in Atlanta doing sessions. Then it was off to San Francisco for more sessions. When he finally arrived home, there were still *more* sessions to do before heading out to England for the George Harrison tribute show. The concert was put together by Eric Clapton and George's family, and featured Keltner and Ringo on drums, along with Paul McCartney, Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne, Tom Scott, and others.

Performing at the event, as well as working on Harrison's CD, was emotionally draining for Keltner, as he and Harrison had been extremely close for many years. "It still hurts," Jim admits. "It's just hard to believe that George won't be a phone call away anymore. He meant so many things to my family and me. He was a beautiful person."

On the new CD, *Brainwashed*, Harrison's beauty shines through song after song. George's guitar playing and singing are strong, as is Jim's always great-feeling drumming. "We recorded a number of tracks over the last few years," he says. "I never really knew which ones would come out. One of my favorites was always 'Stuck Inside A Cloud.' And I really like 'Run So Far.' George's son Dhani played on that one."

Next up for Jim are plans to record a song or two for Warren Zevon's new record. "Losing George was hard," he says, "and now hearing about Warren's health…well…I just feel *very* honored to be a part of their recordings."

Modest to a fault, Jim reluctantly sums up his recent activities by saying, "I like to go about my business and not make a fuss. I don't like talking too much in interviews about what I'm doing and who I'm playing with. I'd rather have the attention go to the younger drummers coming up. It's their turn now."

Billy Amendola

JazzReach's

H. Benjamin Schuman

Most drumming unknowns might not be ready to record with Manhattan's most celebrated jazz musicians. But for H. Benjamin Schuman, the challenge was only part of the thrill. On The Metta Quintet's *Going To Meet The Man* (Koch), Schuman stands toe-to-toe with saxophonist Mark Turner and guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel, highly regarded players with several acclaimed solo albums to their credits. But beyond jazz machismo and improvisational daring, The Metta Quintet is Schuman's vehicle for teaching young people about jazz.

"The goal is to give young people access to jazz music," Schuman says. "There isn't nearly enough being done to promote jazz to a younger audience. That's the mission, to promote the music's vitality and its place in our nation's history and its cultural heritage. We want to plant that seed."

As director of JazzReach Performing Arts & Education Association, Schuman wears a thousand hats, including that of drummer. A graduate of Berklee, Schuman has funneled his considerable energy into JazzReach since 1994, overseeing administrative duties while also setting up educational concert performances nationwide. Where he finds time to practice is a mystery, but Schuman swings with great articulation, finesse, and energy on *Going To Meet The Man*, with tunes that were written specifically for the project by Rosenwinkel and Turner, as well as pianist Brad Mehldau and organist Larry Goldings. The CD is excellent, each song telling unique stories from various jazz viewpoints. But Schuman's inspiration is more than musical.

"I love the music," Schuman asserts, "and I love to perform for young people because they are so open and their tastes aren't so defined that they aren't receptive. There is such a deluge of information now, it's hard to get substantive information to kids. MTV does not enrich kids; many videos are frivolous environments with flashy cars and girls in bikinis. They're not even singing melodies. It's important to expose kids to people actually *playing* musical instruments."

Stolen Moments is JazzReach's latest high school level program; preteens were enlightened by an earlier project, Get Hip. Each performance opens with a short film, then a composition that reflects modern jazz. A narrator summarizes the music, followed by a taped segment on the history of jazz, then more live music from The Metta Quintet. The group continues to tour the country on its educational mission.

"If I hadn't taken up JazzReach," Schuman says, "I would probably be further along as a drummer. I still practice every day. I don't neglect the instrument. But when you have a certain vision about how you want your life to be, or how you want to sound on the drums, that's the vision that motivates you. JazzReach is my vision."

Ken Micallef

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Karen Carpenter was born on March 2, 1950.

Gary Chester drums on Petula Clark's first US hit, "Downtown," which is awarded a gold record on March 1, 1965.

The New Jeff Beck Group, with **Aynsley Dunbar** on drums, Ron Wood on bass, and Rod Stewart on vocals, makes its debut in London on March 3, 1967.

Led Zeppelin (with **John Bonham** on drums, of course) bump Olivia Newton-John out of the number-1 spot on *Billboard's* album charts the week of March 22, 1975 with *Physical Graffiti*.

On March 3, 1995, Nirvana great **Dave Grohl** picks up a guitar to debut with his new band, Foo Fighters.

Happy Birthday!

Roy Haynes (March 13, 1925)
Graeme Edge (March 30, 1942)
Ralph MacDonald (March 15, 1944)
Micky Dolenz (March 8, 1945)
John Hartman (March 18, 1950)
Carl Palmer (March 20, 1950)
Kenny Aronoff (March 7, 1953)
Matt Frenette (March 7, 1954)
Tony Brock (March 31, 1954)
Slim Jim Phantom (March 20, 1961)
Rob Affuso (March 1, 1963)
Brendan Hill (March 27, 1970)
Caroline Corr (March 17, 1973)

Course Of Nature's

Rickey Shelton

Superkala Drumming

As soon as Rickey Shelton heard the rough mix that would become *Superkala*, Course Of Nature's major-label debut, he knew he had found the right gig. Shelton was the last to sign on with the band, joining singer Mark Wilkerson and guitarist John Mildrum just before they headed into the studio to record for Lava/Atlantic.

"You never know what you laid down until you hear it, but I was blown away," says Shelton, who also sings backing vocals. "Of course, the songs are more developed now that we've been on the road for six months, but they really came together early, and I couldn't blow off that feeling."

Shelton says that from a drumming perspective, *Superkala* is a strong album, start to finish. "There are little things about every song that I just can't wait to play," he says. Shelton adds that the music he played with his last band, Dust For Life, was more focused and had more drumming constraints, noting that with Course Of Nature, "I'm able to write more of a drum part instead of just playing along with the guitar."

When composing his parts, Shelton makes full use of his kit. He adds significant texture to several songs with his varied and substantial cymbal work. "That's always something I keep in mind," he says, "using my kit as a whole instrument. I love my brass, and I think I'm pretty good at using them for interpretation, not just accents."

Unlike the seemingly endless list of rock bands that come and go after one album, Shelton believes that Course Of Nature is just getting started. "We're six or seven songs into the next album," he says. "We're just about ready to go into the studio. After that, we'll be back on the road, breaking stuff and being loud."

Harriet L. Schwartz

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HUDSON MUSIC

NEWS

...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS

Shure Performance Gear Drum Mic's

Ready To Hit The Road

HITS

road-worthy construction

excellent acoustic performance for price

PG52 is particularly versatile

by Mark Parsons

Shure has come out with an entirely new line of value-priced mic's designed primarily for the working musician, with live applications in mind. Appropriately enough, they've dubbed the new line Performance Gear.

The PG series consists of six models, three of which have drum-specific applications. They are the PG52 kick mic', the PG56 snare/tom mic', and the PG81 condenser instrument mic'. And to make the pot even sweeter, Shure has bundled up a handful of the drum mic's—along with some essential accessories—into a couple of "drum mic' kits."

By now you've probably figured out that each of these mic's bears the same numerical suffix as the specific Shure SM and Beta models that share the same application. In fact, each of these mic's looks somewhat like its upscale counterpart. But even if you've never seen *any* Shure mic' before, the function of each of our review mic's is pretty apparent upon first glance.

PG52

The Mic's

The PG52 fairly screams "kick mic'," with its squat body, large diameter, integral pivoting stand mount, and sturdy metal construction. The overall weight of the mic' is 17.5 oz. This large dynamic mic' was designed from the ground up to reproduce the low-end punch of a bass drum, so it has the most "tailored" (non-linear) response of any of the PG mic's. The response curve shows a boost of several dB in the bass frequencies, around 80 Hz. There is a reduction through the lower mids, and a peak up around 5 kHz. Furthermore, the "proximity" curve shows an additional 5 dB added to the response from approximately 30 Hz up to around 200 Hz. This is at a distance of 4", which is actually closer to the usual working distance of a kick mic' than the 2' listed for the "normal" response. The polar response for the PG52 (and all of the other PG mic's) is cardioid.

The PG56 snare/tom mic' looks almost identical to the PG52, except that its diameter is substantially smaller. The rugged, all-metal construction (except for the polymer stand mounts) adds to the heft of all the PG drum mic's, and the PG56 is no exception, weighing in at 12.5 oz. As with its big brother, the response of the PG56 is tailored. And like the PG52, the applicable curve for the PG56 is the proximity one, since the mic' will almost universally be used close to the sound source. This curve shows a broad, shallow boost centered at 125 Hz and a couple of small peaks up around 5 kHz.

PG56

The PG56 comes with the A50D drum mount. Except for the threaded knob that holds the mic', the entire mount is one piece of polymer with no moving parts. It clips onto a drum hoop and is held in place by the spring tension of the polymer.

The PG81 is much more like Shure's SM94 than its namesake, the venerable SM81. It's a small-diaphragm cardioid condenser, of pre-polarized design, with an

PG81

on/off switch but no built-in pad (attenuator) or high-pass filter. It can operate on phantom power or a single AA battery. It's a little over 7" long and approximately $^{7}/_{8}$" in diameter, fattening up to a little over 1" toward the diaphragm end. Its weight is 9 oz.

The Kits

The PGDMK6 kit we were sent for review contains a PG52, three PG56s, a pair of PG81s, three A50D drum mounts, and a pair of mic' clips for the PG81s. It also includes six 15' XLR mic' cables, and even a pair of Duracell batteries for the condensers. All of this (except the cables) fits into a nice foam-lined plastic attaché case. (If you don't feel the need for overhead mic's on your particular gig, you can get the PGDMK4, which contains all of the above minus the PG81s.)

Enough talk. Let's play.

The Sound

We started our testing with the PG56, on a snare drum. We ran it next to the mic' that was already in place on this kit, an SM57. The sound was in the same ballpark, with the biggest difference being that the PG56 didn't have as much of an upper midrange presence peak as the 57. The proximity effect upon close placement was also similar to that of the 57, with the PG56 having not quite as much mid-bass "boom" as the 57. Overall, the PG56 gave a realistic representation of the drum and handled the level well.

Next we went to the toms. There the PG56 acquitted itself well, giving a clear, honest picture of the drums. Again, it had slightly less midrange "bite" than a 57, but the two models could certainly be made to sound very similar through a PA with the use of a little board EQ. On a large (14") tom, we ran the PG56 next to another small clip-on dynamic', the Sennheiser e604. The sounds were quite similar, with the Sennheiser having a bit more bottom.

The PG56's clip worked fine, with its slotted arm providing about 3" of adjustment range between the mic' and the drumhead. I would like to have been able to back the mic' up a bit more (in a lateral direction, toward the edge of the head). But these types of clamps are never completely universal, and the A50D gives you more adjustment than most.

Next we listened to the PG52 kick-drum mic', running it next to an AKG D112 as a point of reference. I thought the PG52 held its own alongside a mic' that lists for quite a bit more. The PG52 had a *little* more attack (it was more responsive in the critical 5 kHz "beater" range), while the D112 had a *little* more bass extension. (That is, they both had plenty of "fatness," but the D112 "fat" was a slightly lower note.) The PG52 put out a very nice, punchy, pre-equalized kick sound.

Because I frequently prefer kick mic's over tom mic's on larger toms, I placed a PG52 and a PG56 side-by-side over the 14" drum. And just to see if it would work, I placed them both on A50D mounts. Yep, that little plastic drum mount held that big, heavy kick mic' like it was made for it. Both mic's sounded very good on the drum, but the bigger reduction in the lower mids (coupled with the larger bass boost and upper-mid presence peak) of the PG52 gave the drum a bigger, punchier sound. (The difference was not huge, however. The PG56 is also pre-emphasized, just not as much.) With the PG52 and the D112 both over the large tom, the results were very close (and the D112 is one of my favorite floor-tom mic's). This mic' is a real sleeper.

We listened to the PG81s above the kit in a typical overhead position. I'm not always fond of the sound of inexpensive small-diaphragm electrets, but these mic's were a happy exception. They yielded a very clean, accurate picture of the drumset. There was good extension in the high frequencies, yet without the harshness that often accompanies small pre-polarized condensers. As you would expect from this type of design, there wasn't a ton of beef on the bottom, but that's not a handicap when it comes to reproducing cymbals. The response was relatively flat, with a very gentle lift to the higher frequencies that helps things sparkle in a mix but doesn't add any harshness to it.

The Wrap

The Performance Gear Drum Mic' Kit that contained our review mic's isn't the first "drum-miking setup in a box" to hit the market, but it *is* one of the most complete, with mic's, mounts, cables, and case. Of course, none of that would matter if the mic's in it didn't sound good. Conversely, the quality of the sound would be sort of academic if the price were astronomical. Well, in this instance we have a line of microphones that provide very good sonic quality, don't cost an arm and a leg, and are backed up by a name that has long been synonymous with the word "reliability" in the microphone business. Sounds like a winning combo to me.

THE NUMBERS

PG52 Bass Drum Mic' **$245.00**
PG56 Snare/Tom Mic' **$143.50**
PG81 Instrument Mic' **$245.00**
PGDMK4 4-Mic' Kit (no PG81 overheads) **$521.50**
PGDMK6 6-Mic' Kit (includes PG81 overheads) **$927.50**

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Arbiter Flats Lite Kit

Talk About "Less Is More"

HITS

extremely lightweight

surprising tone and projection from toms and snare

affordable price

MISSES

bass drum doesn't have the low end for loud acoustic situations

Arbiter's Flats are compact drumkits featuring single-headed toms and bass drums and thin, double-headed snares. The new Flats Lite kit is much lower in weight than the original Flats, which were introduced a couple of years ago and are now called Flats Pro. This reduction in weight is achieved through the use of glass-filled nylon for the clamp, rim, shell, and mounting bracket of each drum. And not only are the Flats kits lightweight and compact, they also feature Arbiter's genuinely revolutionary Advanced Tuning (AT) system.

One-Point Tuning

For those who aren't familiar with the Arbiter AT System, here's a quick overview. The system is based on a V-clamp design originally used in aerospace technology to secure two lengths of pipe together end to end. Ivor Arbiter, an inventor and owner of a large musical instrument distribution company in Europe, figured that that engineering concept could be applied to tuning drums.

Ivor's tuning system uses a single clamp that follows the perimeter of the drum and is tensioned with a single drumkey-operated screw. The result is that the head receives absolutely even tension all around the circumference of the drum.

Arbiter first made regular wood-shelled drums with the AT system. Later, they developed Flats. The Flats have no shell, only a small hoop just large enough to allow the V-clamp to attach a head. Arbiter's wood-shelled drums have been out of production for a while, while the company focused on producing more of the Flats series equipment. Rumor has it that Arbiter may offer wood-shell drums again soon.

More Than Meets The Eye

To look at them, you'd think that Flats would produce less volume and tone than a regular-shelled drumkit. Not so. After playing the Flats, one comes to the inescapable conclusion that the primary source of sound from a drum must, in fact, be the drumhead.

The Flats Lite kit, with its lighter, less-expensive composite construction, is targeted at beginning drummers. But it could easily be used in many circumstances by working professionals. The kit is sold as a complete drumset, including drums (Flats), cymbals, hardware, a pair of Vic Firth 5A sticks, and a *Getting Started* training manual taken from Mike Dolbear's book *Rhythm And Fills*. The only thing missing here is a drum throne.

The "drums" on the Flats Lite kit include a 12" snare, 10", 12", and 14" toms, and a 20" bass drum. The kit includes 13" hi-hat cymbals, a 14" crash, and an 18" crash/ride. Two cymbal stands (one straight, one boom), a snare stand, a bass drum pedal, a hi-hat stand, and tom mounting brackets are also included.

More That Meets The Ear

The drums' diameters look small on paper, but their sound isn't. They're as loud or louder than a shelled drum of the same size. And their tuning range seems much larger than that of a shelled drum. The 10" tom easily has a two-octave useable range. In the higher tension area, the drum sounds almost like a high-pitched timbale. As

you move down in tension, a high-tom tone develops, followed by a mid-tom sound with plenty of pitch bend. When the head gets really slack, you get some growl as it flops out. I didn't count this tonal area as part of the useable range, but you might if that's the sound you are looking for.

The 12" and 14" toms have an even larger pitch range—around two and a half octaves. As with the 10" tom, the 12" and 14" have three effective tuning areas: a high, tight tone, a middle tone with lots of pitch bend, and a slack low-end range. These tones are achieved with the clear, two-ply heads that are supplied from the factory.

The 12" snare drum has just enough shell to allow two V-clamps to be mounted. It's fitted with a coated batter head and a clear snare head. At first I thought I'd only use this drum as a side-snare and bring one of my other full-size drums out as the main snare. This proved unnecessary. Despite its diminutive size, the tone of the 12" snare is surprisingly full. The fun thing about this snare is that you can play the batter head while adjusting the tension of the snare head—which really lets you hear how the tensioning of the snare head affects the tone of the drum. Once you've experimented with this for about five minutes, you'll figure out that the snare head has much more to do with the tone and sustain of a snare drum than you ever imagined.

There is no snare throw-off mechanism, so the snares are "on" all the time. Tightening or loosening screws on either side of the drum sets the snare-strainer tension. It's important to adjust both sides so that the strainer stays centered. (Flats Pro snares do have a throw-off. Perhaps a future upgrade of the Flats Lite will include that feature.)

The Real Lowdown

Getting a good sound out of the bass drum is a bit trickier than with the toms or the snare. First off, the location of the pedal mount seems to force the beater to travel just a bit further to reach the head than on a conventional bass drum. Also, if you typically "bury" the beater into the head when you play, you'll find the Flats Lite bass drum too dead sounding, without much tone. If you can adjust your style so that the beater comes off the head when you play, you'll find that this improves sustain and tone. (The bass drum comes with a clear PowerStroke 3–type head with the Arbiter Flats Lite logo.)

The big question with *any* bass drum is: How much low end can it produce? The problem with a single-headed, shell-less bass drum is not that it can't create low frequencies. It can, by default—simply due to the diameter of the head. What's missing is the resonance provided by a shell cavity and a front head, which add depth and tone to the low-pitched initial sound of the batter head. I didn't miss this effect on the toms, but its absence is noticeable on the bass drum.

Interestingly, I found that the Flats Lite bass drum sounds much fuller, with a rounder tone, when I tensioned the head more tightly than I would normally tension a conventional bass drum. With this much sound and tone I'd have no problem playing a jazz gig, or a low-volume casual (especially if I had to schlepp up a couple of flights of stairs). But I wouldn't feel comfortable trying to cut a rock gig acoustically.

Now, that doesn't mean that the Flats Lite couldn't be adapted for use in louder situations by pro players. For example, it would be a simple matter to trigger off the bass drum (or any of the drums, for that matter) to achieve a wider variety of tonal choices. And of course, there's always the option of miking and adding low-end EQ at the board. Another thought would be to use the Flats Lite bass drum as a gong drum and substitute a conventional bass drum or trigger pad in its place for the main kick. In any of those cases you'd still retain the advantages of the Flats Lite's compactness and portability.

Heads Up

I experimented with various heads I had in my studio to see how they would alter the sound of the Flats. The easiest way to explain the outcome is that whatever the advertised characteristic of a particular head might be, that characteristic is particularly obvious on a Flats drum. (This is probably because the resonance of a particular shell depth and wood type is removed from the sound equation.) I also found that heads with a thick rim (Aquarians, for example) won't seat in the V-clamp. If the collar is particularly tall, you may need to coax the head into the clamp by tensioning the head slowly while holding the Flat upside-down to monitor for slippage.

About The Cymbals...

As I mentioned earlier, the Flats Lite kit is targeted at entry-level to semi-pro players, and comes complete with cymbals. The cymbals carry an Arbiter Flats logo, and according to the company's Website are Canadian-made. (There's only one cymbal manufacturer in Canada; you figure it out.) Given the price of the kit, it's not surprising that these are entry-level cymbals. Still, the ride was acceptable, giving a definite ping with minimal wash. The crash was too tinny for my taste, but someone else might find it to be just the sound they're looking for. The hi-hats are high-pitched with a lot of high-frequency overtones—especially if you use too much pressure on the pedal. Beginning drummers will find the cymbals useable, while pro-level drummers could use them for practice cymbals.

Supporting Cast

For a bargain-priced kit, the Flats Lite hardware is quite good. The double-braced stands are lightweight but sturdy, and they feature height adjusters with nylon inserts that clamp down securely. The bass-drum pedal is a CB Drums brand, with dual-spring action, chain linkage, and a two-piece footplate. It plays smoothly and should be sturdy enough to last for years. The CB Drums hi-hat stand has a center-pull, chain-link action that's smooth and quiet. There's no adjustment for spring tension, marking this stand as a bargain unit. But it certainly works well enough.

The best feature of this kit is its low weight. The snare drum weighs just about four pounds, the largest tom only two, and the bass drum assembly—with the pedal attached—only nine. This feature, combined with the sound that the kit is capable of producing, certainly makes it difficult to justify hauling around heavy, shelled drums.

Summing Up

Overall, this is an excellent kit for beginners. It would also make a useful addition to any pro's gear collection as a practice tool, for jam sessions, or for quickie one-off casual gigs. It's easy to haul, tune, and afford, and it has surprising tonal qualities given its simple design.

THE NUMBERS

Flats Lite (drums, cymbals, and hardware) **$599.99**

Carrying bags are available at extra cost.

(877) 553-5596, www.arbiterdrums.com.

Orlich Glass Snare Drum

Art Meets Acoustics

HITS

innovative, eye-catching design

excellent volume and sonic variety

dual strainers offer tuning flexibility

MISSES

overtones can be hard to control

weight makes travel prohibitive

lacks low- and mid-range punch

It's hard *not* to marvel at the beauty and workmanship of the Orlich snare drum. One look tells you that this is a genuinely unique creation. Surprisingly, though, it isn't something all that new. In fact, John Orlich has been refining his glass drums since 1988. It's just that he only recently undertook a major effort to promote them to the marketplace.

John sent us a 7x14 snare made of twenty-seven panes of $1\frac{1}{2}$"-wide, $\frac{3}{16}$"-thick beveled glass, surrounded by a metal bracing frame. The glass creates an impressive resonating chamber, although I can't say I'm really sold on the nature of the sound it creates. Glass is not a sound-absorbing material. Rather, it reflects sound waves, forcing them to co-mingle within the drum. This creates a host of overtones. Orlich claims that the lacquer-coated brushed-finish brass frame that holds the panes of glass together also cuts out harmonics that might cause undesirable overtones. As they put it, the glass-to-metal ratio in the drum's construction acts as a regulating factor.

Sound Performance

The drum is undeniably beautiful. So let's talk about sound. When I smacked the drum at dead center, it produced a confined sound, as if there was no way for the sound waves to escape or for the drum to breathe (even though one pane of glass is segmented to create a vent). The drum had a fair amount of presence, but not the warmth of a wooden snare or the crack of a brass snare. Its sound was right in the middle. It was loud, it was wild, and it could be subtle, but beefy it wasn't.

The drum came equipped with a one-ply batter head. A two-ply head might help the drum deliver the mids and lows that I feel help to give a snare drum its punch. Now, I do tend to prefer a deeper snare sound than a lot of other drummers do. The sound of the Orlich might be just what you're looking for.

Playing the drum closer to the edges opens up the harmonic possibilities. But doing so can also make it tough to get a handle on the overtones. If you have time for a lot of fine-tuning, you can get some attractive tones by working with the double snare strainer system. (The drum came fitted with Yamaha strainer hardware.) In general, it seems that the looser the snares are, the wilder the combination of overtones.

Orlich also offers custom drumkits.

Functional Features

The bearing edges on the snare bed have been tapered down to allow maximum consistent pressure of the snares against the bottom head. A 20-strand coiled-wire extended snare set is standard.

At first try, changing drumheads on the Orlich snare is a new and challenging experience, since the free-floating lug rings slip off when the tension rods are loosened. However, the process can be easily mastered through practice.

The brass tuning lugs are attached to L-shaped brackets that fit under the shell edges, allowing for slight pivot and shift. Thus, the rods seek their own alignment when tightened. This is a major factor in the durability of the drum. I deliberately played repeated rimshots—*hard*—and never did any damage to the rim or the shell. The metal structure has a little "give" to it and absorbs impact well. I didn't personally try a "drop test," but the company claims that the glass shell can survive such impact unless thrown violently to the ground.

Actually, it would be almost impossible to throw this drum *anywhere*. It's much heavier than any comparably sized drum I've ever picked up. I'd hate to have to carry it for any distance. On the other hand, once installed on a stand, it's going to stay put, even under heavy stick impact.

The Glass Ceiling

This is a quality product, without doubt. Its sound characteristics, while potentially tricky to control, are nonetheless distinctive and original, which is sure to appeal to some rugged individualists out there. And while I doubt that many drummers are going to exchange their wood, aluminum, brass, or copper snares to go *exclusively* for glass, those seeking something truly unique in both sound and appearance need look no further.

THE NUMBERS

7x14 Glass Snare Drum **$875**
Snare drums of all sizes are available to order.
Y **(252) 441-9233,** **www.orlichpercussion.com.**

Istanbul Agop Agop Signature Cymbals

Made According To A Master's Recipe

HITS

extra reach with good balance

outstanding construction and finish

by Robin Tolleson

No, the headline above isn't a misprint. The brand is Istanbul Agop. The new series we're reviewing is called the Agop Signature series. From that combination, you might get the impression that this Agop guy must have been somebody special.

A Little History

In fact, Agop Tomurcuk was the guiding force behind the creation of the Istanbul Cymbal Company back in the 1970s. When the company split a decade later, one of the resulting new operations took his name as their brand designation. Hence "Istanbul Agop." Over the years that company has produced a wide variety of esoteric, traditional "Turkish-style" cymbals, and has also made inroads into the more contemporary cymbal market with models designed for rock and pop applications.

But recently the craftsmen at Istanbul Agop came across old Agop's notebooks, which contain his personal recipe for the "ultimate" hand-made cymbals, circa 1983. His old tools were still in the factory. The cymbal markers decided to use those notes and tools to create rides and hi-hats that would not only be unique instruments, but would stand as a tribute to their master. Thus the Agop Signature series was born.

The Cymbals

Istanbul Agop sent us three sizes of ride cymbals and two sizes of hi-hats. They sent two of each ride size to show how individual these cymbals are. The same size cymbal can have a slight—but still very noticeable—difference in fundamental pitch. For example, one 20" ride had a C pitch; the other had a D. The difference between the 21" and 22" models was a half-tone. So those of you who appreciate uniqueness of sound can rest assured that no two Agop Signature models are going to sound exactly the same.

Nor will they *look* the same. To begin with, all of the cymbals sport a rustic appearance (as in "made a century or two ago"). Their antique look and 1983-era green-ink logo make them quite eye-catching. It's hard to tell whether the imperfections on the cymbals—bubbles, dents, extra unfinished splashes of bronze—are simply left in during the manufacturing process, or intentionally designed *into* the process.

Sound Specifics

If you like dry-sounding cymbals with a lot of traditional character, the Agop Signatures should definitely be on your listening list. They sound flat, pingy, or splashy depending on how you put the stick into them. The bells on the rides are wide and fairly flat, making them easy to ride on. Of course, to get a distinct "ping" from the bell you need to strike with more force than on some other rides (or use the shank of the stick). Riding the bell with a normal stroke produces a slight but effective degree of tonal change.

All of the rides are manageable in terms of overtone build-up, and they all can be

played as crash-rides using different parts of the stick. The 22" size seemed to have the most control, the flattest sound, and the fewest disruptive overtones.

Both sets of hi-hats are winners. The 14" hats sound fairly deep, with a dry flavor and a distinct, cutting "chick" sound when played with a stick or the foot. Surprisingly, the 13" hats are a little beefier, and may present a slightly warmer tone than that of the 14" hats. It's interesting that the bells on the hi-hats are more pronounced than those on the ride cymbals, allowing for some interesting offbeat stickwork.

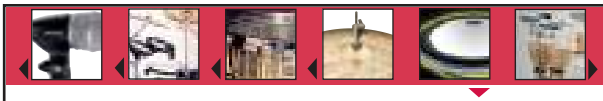
Bottom Line

Cymbals are all about expression. The individualistic Agop Signature rides and hi-hats offer drummers the opportunity to express themselves with sounds and looks from a time long gone by.

THE NUMBERS

13" Hi-hats	$437
14" Hi-hats	$465
20" Ride	$446
21" Ride	$494
22" Ride	$541

Y (201) 599-0100, www.istanbulcymbals.com



Quick Looks

New Evans Products

Coated EMAD Bass Drum Head

Do you breathe a sigh of resignation every time you have to remove your bass drum head simply to adjust a piece of foam inside the drum? Or perhaps you're running around your kit and crouching down to reach through the sound hole in front? If so, you ought to check out the EMAD (Externally Mounted Adjustable Damping) bass drum head from Evans. This is a simple, well-thought-out design that provides an effective solution to damping the bass drum head. (And it's so obvious that one wonders why no one thought of it before.)

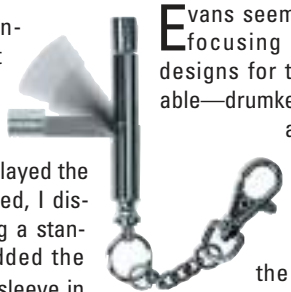
While clear EMAD heads hit the market a little over a year ago, the head we were sent for review was the coated version introduced last summer. It's a fairly standard single-ply, 10-mil coated head, with the notable exception of a plastic sleeve (12 mil) that's attached around the edge. The sleeve is intended to hold one of the two foam damping rings included with the head. The rings are ¾" and 1½" wide and ¼" thick. Either of these rings will slide easily into (or out of) the plastic sleeve. The beauty of this design is that the sleeve is on the *playing* side of the batter head (instead of on the inside of the drum), thus permitting instant access.

As I mounted the head I wondered if the sleeve would affect tuning, but quickly found that it didn't. The sleeve was not really in the way, and did not affect the tone of the drum. In fact, when I played the drum with no muffling ring inserted, I discerned no difference from playing a standard head wide open. I then added the 1½"-wide ring, tucking it into the sleeve in a matter of seconds. The result was a focused, solid boom, with plenty of bottom end. When I switched to the ¾" ring (which again took only seconds), the drum sounded more open overall yet still had good focus, without the excess ring of an unmuffled head.

No matter which damping ring I used, the bass drum sounded great throughout a full dynamic range, whether I feathered the drum lightly or really laid into it. And this was with no other form of muffling used on or in the drum.

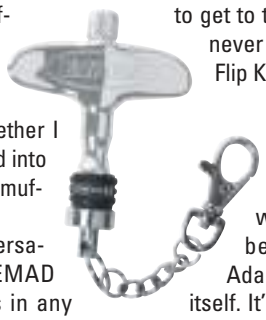
With its quick accessibility and versatility, the control offered by the EMAD bass head would be advantageous in any situation. It offers excellent control for studio work. And it provides the drummer with the ability to change the acoustic nature of the bass drum during a live performance. Coated EMAD bass heads are available in 18" ($64), 20" ($67), 22" ($70), and 24" ($80) sizes. Clear EMAD heads in the same sizes are priced slightly lower.

Flip Key And Key Chain Adapter



Evans seems to be the only company focusing on genuinely innovative designs for the lowly—but indispensable—drumkey. After their Magnetic Key and Torque Key, now comes the Flip Key and Key Chain Adapter.

The Flip Key gets its name because the stem of the "T" folds into the crosspiece for compactness, essentially turning the key from a "T" shape into an "I." Comfortable in the pocket and unobtrusive, it is attached to a quick-release key chain for easy accessibility. As long as you remember your car keys (and it's tough to get to the gig without them), you'll never be without a drumkey. The Flip Key is priced at $24.99.



If you already have a major drumkey collection, but you still never seem to have one *with* you when you need it, you might benefit from the Key Chain Adapter. It's not actually a key itself. It's a key chain with a rubber socket designed to grip any standard drumkey. With this handy gadget you can make any one of your drumkeys an easily accessed part of your key chain to prevent loss. The Adapter lists for $9.99.

Y (631) 439-3300, www.evansdrumheads.com.

Martin Patmos

Toca Unplugged Percussion

Batteries Not Included...Or Needed!

HITS

extra reach with good balance

outstanding construction and finish

by Norman Arnold

Be naked! Be free! Be unplugged! Not that most drummers actually "plug in" in the first place. But when everyone else in your band starts unplugging and going acoustic, you can join them with these cool new goodies from Toca.

The Concept

Essentially, the Toca Unplugged series is a group of percussion instruments that can be played individually or in a drumset-type setup. The traditional toms have been replaced by wooden-headed djembes and bongos, the snare by a single-headed tambourine-snare, and the kick drum by clave blocks and a cajon, which doubles as a seat. The djembes and bongos are made of double-ply Asian oak, the same wood Toca uses for their congas. The cajon is made of Asian oak as well. All the drums feature very high-quality construction.

What really makes this kit sound unique is the wooden heads. They're $\frac{1}{8}$" thick and have been glued and nailed, then sanded down for a very comfortable edge that you can play with sticks or your hands. Of course they're not tunable (it's wood nailed to wood, after all). But that's not an issue, because they sound great.

The Sound

I set up the kit as a traditional drumset, with some cymbals, hi-hats, and the like—which is a pretty good starting place. At first I played the kit with Vic Firth Rutes (wooden multi-rods), which produced a cool, snappy sound.

The bongos have a traditional middle bracket and come with a mounting stand. I positioned them right in front of the snare, as you would your rack toms. I used them on the stand, playing the small bongo as a ride source instead of a hi-hat. The drum created an "organic," woody sound. I also took the bongos off their stand and played them between my knees in the traditional manner. They were comfortable to play and sounded great that way, too.

Each of the two djembes (large and small) comes with a mounting bracket (made by Everyone's Drumming) that goes around the body of the drum and can be attached to just about any stand or tom arm. I set them both up to my right, as you would a pair of floor toms. They sounded great with the Rutes. But

I also used my hands quite a bit, producing terrific slap and low tones. The surface is smooth and easy to get a variety of tones out of. The djembes could be used alone for a conga-type part in a song, or as a tom for more drumset-oriented fills. Of course you can also detach them from the stand and play them in the traditional method.

The 10" Synergy Jingle Snare is really neat. It has no bottom head; it produces a snare sound via the metal snares pressed up against the underside of the batter head. The snare can be adjusted and the head can be tuned. I left both of them pretty loose for a great, sloppy kind of sound.

The snare drum shell also has two rows of tambourine jingles. If you just hit the edge, the drum sounds more "tambourine-y." Hit it dead center and it's a snare drum. In either case it's relatively quiet, so you can lay into it without fear of overpowering anyone.

The Big Boy Cajon, which is used as the throne, can produce a variety of tones from a very low thump to a high slap. The whole kit and the cajon sound great together when played with just the hands.

To round out the unplugged kit, Toca provides a clave block and mount to be used with a kick drum pedal. This is the only part that might come down to more of a personal preference. The sound of a woodblock in place of a kick drum might be perfect for a particular song, or even for a whole gig in a very quiet setting. However, to my ears it didn't provide a solid enough foundation, even for acoustic stuff. Something sounded like it was missing. So I set up my regular kick—and that was an okay solution.

But another idea was to take the kick pedal off the wood block mount and turn it around to hit the Cajon (using a soft felt beater, naturally). I had to play the pedal with my heel, but that didn't prove difficult at all—really. (Let's face it, you're not going to be playing speed metal on this rig.) And the cajon/kick matched the overall sound and vibe of the rest of the kit. It was much less overpowering than a regular kick drum, but much more solid sounding than the clave block. So, hey Toca folks: Maybe a bracket to attach a pedal to the cajon would be a good idea.

Conclusion

Whether you decide to use only one instrument or the entire "drumkit" assembly, Toca's Unplugged Percussion series offers a great alternative to "traditional" percussion or drums. I see lots of potential uses in low-key gigs like coffeehouses and small clubs, and even in acoustic segments of louder gigs. And for just playing at home...*really* cool.

THE NUMBERS

Large Wood Top Djembe (WTDJ-L, 13x25)	**$259.50**
Small Wood Top Djembe (WTDJ-S, 11x25)	**$159.50**
Wood Top Bongos (WTB, 7x7 & 8½x7)	**$159.50**
Big Boy Cajon (BBC, 14x20x12)	**$290.00**
Synergy Jingle Snare (TS-410JS,10")	**$139.50**
Clave Block Set (TCB-SA, soprano or alto, with mount)	**$ 49.50**
Clave Block Pedal Mount Package (TCBPKG)	**$ 85.00**
Everyone's Drumming Djembe Mounting System (MS2K)	**$ 49.99**

Y **(860) 509-8888,** **www.kamanmusic.com.**

Quick Looks

DW Tunerz

Is tuning your drum to an accurate pitch a challenge? Do the tension rods on your snare tend to loosen up as you slam home those backbeats? DW's Tunerz, a fine-tuning and self-locking tension rod designed by Terry Bozzio, offers a solution to these problems.

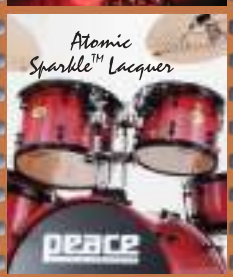
Tunerz tension rods have notched heads that fit into a cup-shaped plastic piece called an Interlocking Flex-Receiver. The oval bottom section of this plastic piece (DW calls it an Elliptical Earlock) fits snugly into the oval holes in the drum hoop and holds the plastic piece in place while you tighten the tension rod. Knurls on the tension rod catch in slits cut in the plastic cup in such a way as to hold the rod in place as you tune your drumhead. In one 360° rotation of the tension rod there are eight points where the knurls click into place. This allows fine-tuning in 45° increments, and also locks the tension rod in place so it won't loosen up as you play.

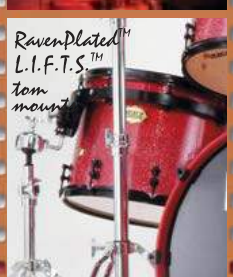
You begin the tuning process by tuning your drum by ear until its tone and pitch are consistent around the head. At that point the Tunerz come into play, stepping up the tension in nice, small increments that accurately and consistently bring the drum up to the exact pitch you want. You can tighten the rods individually, click by click, and stop when you've reached the desired pitch—without overshooting the mark. You can also simply tighten each tension rod the same amount of clicks to reach a higher pitch.

To test the durability of the Tunerz, I fitted them onto a snare drum and cranked it up to a very high tension. The Tunerz held just fine. Then I totally de-tuned the drum, after which I brought it up to a basic tuning point by ear. I tested the Tunerz' fine-tuning ability by tightening the rods five clicks each. When I was finished, the pitch was consistent all around the head. Tunerz made the tuning process easier and quicker, and delivered accurate results.

Tunerz are available in 1⅜", 1⅝", 2¼", and 2¾" lengths, and in standard (10-24) and True-Pitch (5 mm) thread sizes. They're designed to fit most drums. However, owing to differences in the size and shape of the holes in the many different rims on the market, there are a few that Tunerz won't fit. DW is looking into finding a resolution for that problem. List price for a ten-pack is $19.95.

Kevin D. Osborne





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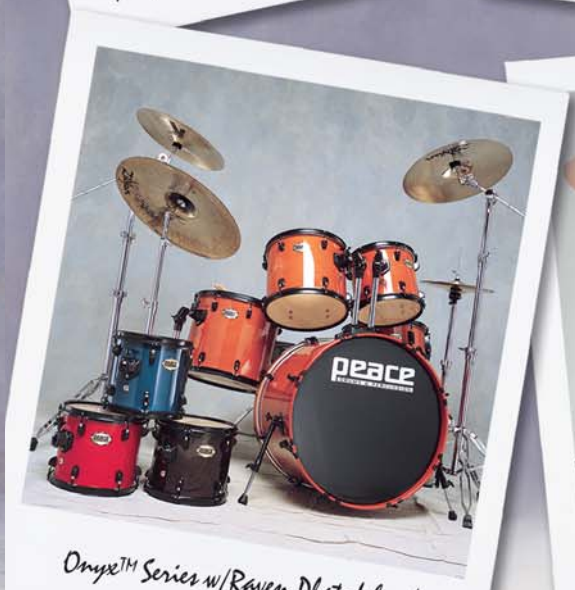

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18 100-6

19 100-6

20 100-6

21 100-6

22 100-6

Josh Freese

In Demand

Gigs...And More Gigs!

A Perfect Circle
The Vandals
Devo
Guns N' Roses
Chris Cornell
Rob Zombie
Ween
Puddle Of Mudd
Dweezil Zappa
Julianna Hatfield
Meredith Brooks
Avril Lavigne
Unwritten Law

Looking at Josh Freese across a Starbucks table, it's hard to believe I've known him since he was eleven years old. Suddenly it struck me that he was then the same age that my son is now, and the comparison was mind-blowing. At eleven years old, Josh was already fiercely into his instrument. He had a career focus and a true commitment. When I met this kid, I wondered to myself if his ambition would last.

Well, Josh's passion hasn't wavered for a moment. Having just turned thirty, he has produced a body of work that most musicians wouldn't have the opportunity to complete by age fifty. And although the eyes looking back at me today have an obvious maturity (he and significant other Nicole Amdurer are parents of an almost two-year-old, Hunter Cole), Josh's enthusiasm for the work is still wonderfully childlike.

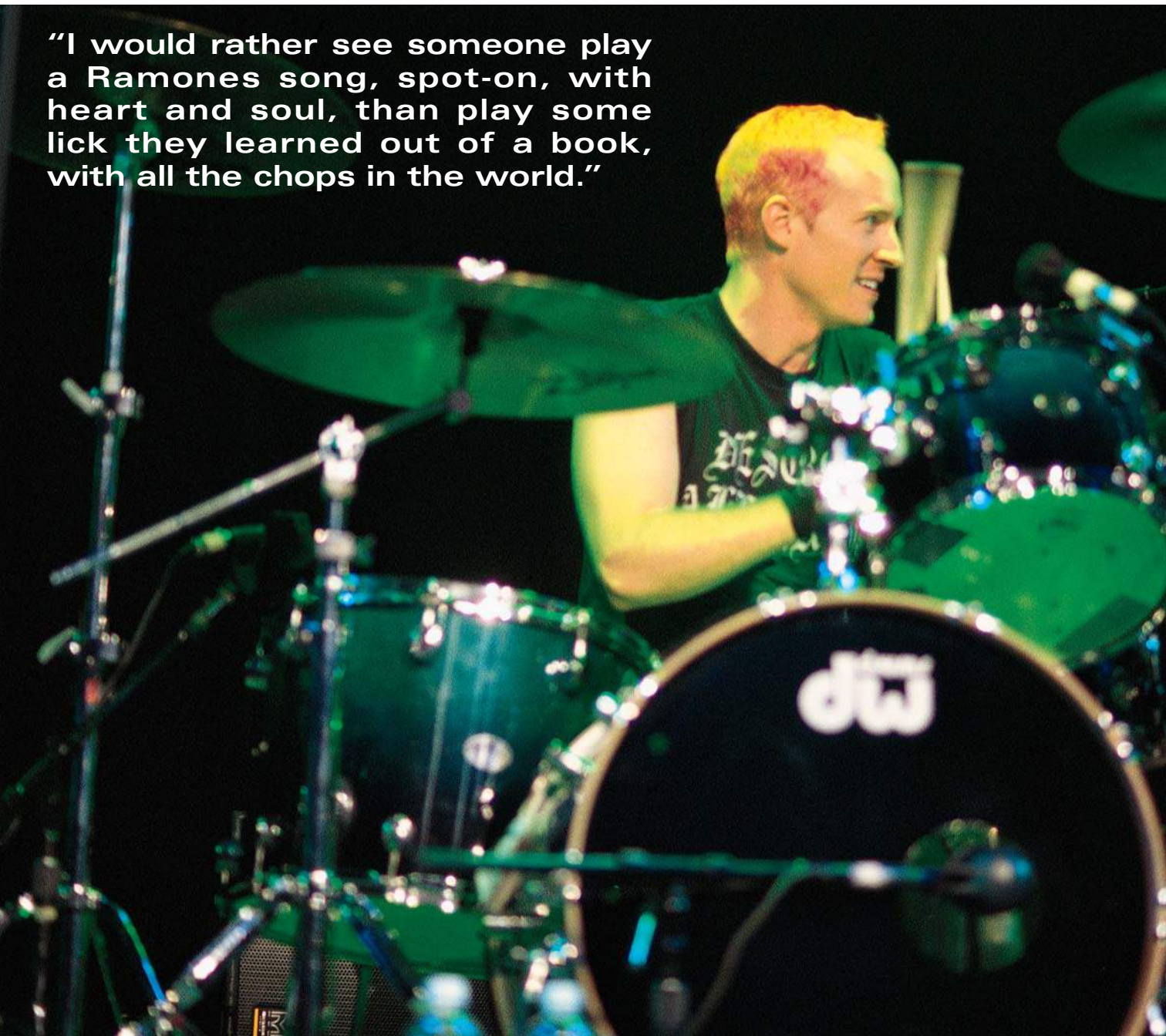
Story by Robyn Flans • Photos by Alex Solca

Freese took the instrument seriously from the get-go. His first drum teacher was Ron Romano, with whom he started when he was eight. Unfortunately that relationship ended when Josh's dad, the director for the band at Disneyland in California, got Ron a job playing down at Disney World in Florida. "I cried when Ron left," Josh admits. But watching his dad direct the Disneyland band, combined with playing to Devo records in his bedroom, seemed to be a productive next step for Freese, whose other significant teacher was Roy Burns. "He was a *great* teacher," Josh says. "I've tried to teach, and I suck at it. People ask me all the time to give them lessons, and I tell them not to waste their time. Some guys are great teachers and some guys aren't." Josh has also taken lessons with drum giants like Terry Bozzio and Gregg Bissonette.

Another "tutor" for young Josh was Vinnie Colaiuta. The two met at a NAMM show when Josh was eleven, and it turned out to be an invaluable experience for the youngster, as Vinnie began regularly inviting him and his father down to LA club the Baked Potato to see the master play. "I'd sit behind Vinnie," Josh says, "and I'd leave being half-inspired and half-discouraged. He was phenomenal, and then he'd be cool enough the next day when I'd call him at 9:00 A.M. to answer my stupid questions, like, 'What kind of bass drum beater were you using last night?' He had probably gotten to bed two hours before, but he was always cool to me."

At that same NAMM show, Josh's life took a major turn, when, while banging away on some Simmons electronic kits, the company took notice of his impressive playing and asked him to represent their company to the youth market. Simmons sent Freese to various NAMM shows to demonstrate the product, and even put him in a commercial. The only drawback for Josh was that he became tagged as "an electronic drummer," and he spent the next three years as the electronic drummer beside the set drummer in a Disneyland band called Polo.

By age fifteen, Freese was itching to have some different experiences. "I grew up a huge Devo fan," he admits, "but by the time I was eleven or twelve, I had read many articles in *Modern Drummer* with



Terry Bozzio, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Chad Wackerman, where they were saying, 'Playing with Frank Zappa was so challenging…playing with Frank was so this…playing with Frank was so that….' So I started going out and buying Zappa records, and I became infatuated with that music at a pretty young and impressionable age."

A chance meeting with Frank Zappa's son Ahmet brought Freese to Ahmet's brother Dweezil's attention. Although he never played with Frank, Josh did have the thrill of watching him in the studio, and he did get to play with Dweezil. It was in Dweezil's trio that Josh came in contact with one of his greatest mentors, Frank Zappa bassist Scott Tunis, who turned the youngster on to punk rock. Aside from opening musical doors, Tunis, who was already an adult, taught Freese an even greater lesson about maintaining an open mind.

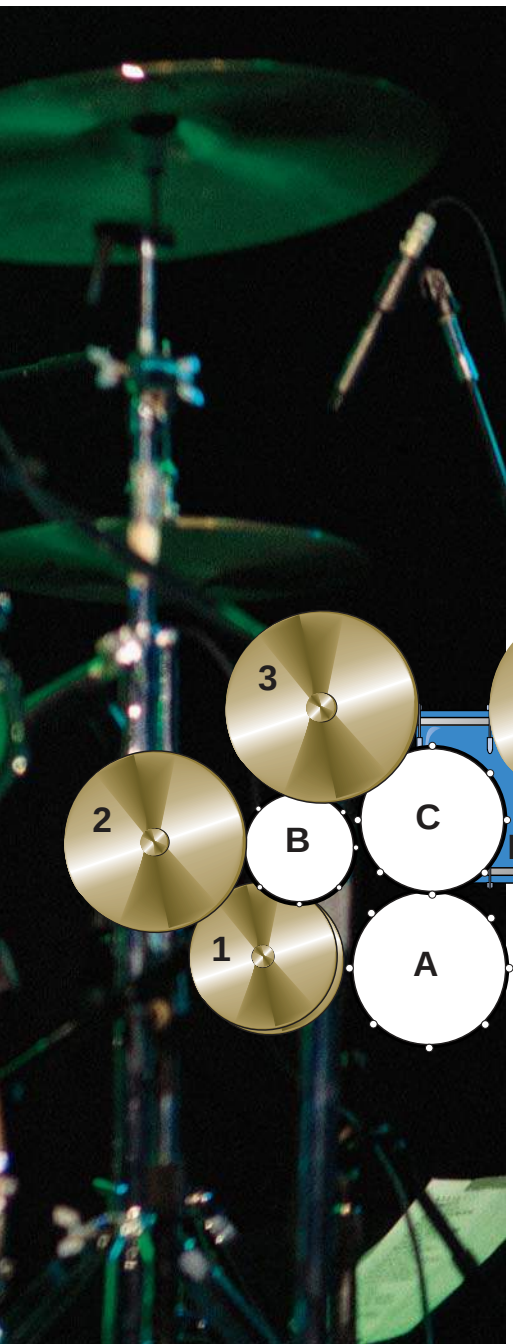
When Dweezil took a break, Freese landed his first major tour with Michael Damian, and eventually came in contact with the bands Infectious Grooves and Suicidal Tendencies. Before he knew it, Josh was getting an abundance of session calls for his ability in the studio to play spot-on but a little left of center. In the early '90s, he hooked up with the punk band The Vandals and recorded and gigged with Paul Westerberg. Albums by Juliana Hatfield, Meredith Brooks, Chris Cornell, Tracy Bonham, Indigo Girls, and Puddle Of Mudd followed. Before he knew it, Josh was surprised to find himself voted number-2 studio drummer in the *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll.

Freese has never stopped long enough to realize that he is, in fact, a top studio musician, or fully acknowledge the recognition his position has brought him. Heck, Josh wasn't even aware that he had recorded half of the recent multi-million-selling album by Avril Lavigne until way after its release. At that time, it had been just another session with a producer he knows. Listeners can be forgiven for not knowing all of Josh's big credits, too, for instance, his uncredited appearance on Puddle Of Mudd's huge *Come Clean* album. Sometimes the project name changes by the time the music is on the radio, so Freese is always amused when he finds out that he's the drummer on the song he's hearing on the radio.

According to Freese, many times the scenario goes like this: "I'll get a call from a producer who says, 'Josh, I need you in the studio next week. The band is back wherever they live. We have all the Pro Tools files open—it will be you, me, the computer, and an engineer. You have to redo three or four songs.' So I'll go in, knock out the tunes, and a lot of times I don't even hear the finished record. Sometimes it ends up being a hit without my even realizing it."

After being a member of Guns N' Roses between 1998 and 2000, Josh left in favor of the varied menu of music to which he had become accustomed. He continues to play on and off with The Vandals and Paul Westerberg, while consistently getting involved with new projects that turn him on, such as A Perfect Circle, whose debut album, *Mer De Noms*, garnered critical acclaim right out of the gate, and an offshoot called Tapeworm.

"I've tracked down, become friends with, and gotten to work alongside almost every one of my heroes," Josh says. "A lot of those people don't make a ton of



Josh's Drums

"My studio setup varies constantly," Freese says. "But it's usually a cross between a simple four-piece kit, like I use with The Vandals, and a larger kit like the one shown here, which I use with A Perfect Circle."

Drums: DW in black finish
A. 6½x14 bell brass snare
B. 8x10 tom
C. 11x13 tom
D. 14x16 floor tom
E. 16x18 floor tom
F. 18x22 kick

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" New Beat (or Quick Beat) hi-hats
2. 18" A Custom Projection crash
3. 19" A Custom Projection crash
4. 20" A Custom crash
5. 21" A Rock ride
6. 19" A Custom Projection crash

Hardware: DW, including a double pedal

Heads: Remo coated CS (dot) on snare batter, coated or clear Emperors on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors on bottoms, clear PowerStroke 3 on kick

Sticks: Vater Josh Freese H-220 signature model

money, but as a fan, a kid who was always more into the underdog, that's the music I fell in love with. Before there was alternative music, I was into it. I've gotten to work with people who I consider to be true artists, and to me that's way more rewarding than the big money. I've played with some big-money people, too, but that's never the motivation."

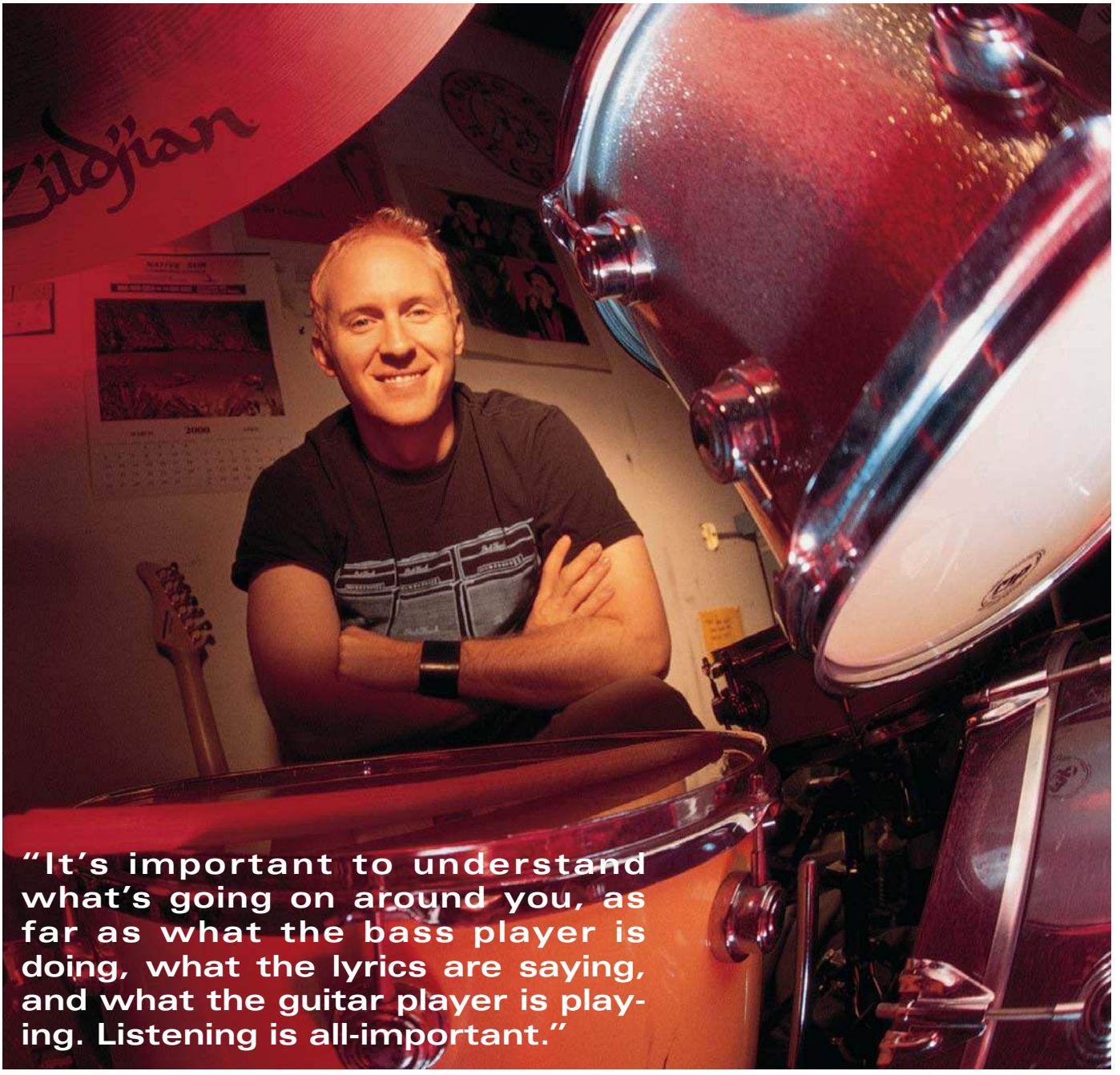
MD: How do you explain the seriousness you had about your instrument and career at such an early age? You were considered a bit of a child prodigy.

Josh: I was infatuated with music and drums at an early age. I come from a pretty musical family. My grandparents on my dad's side both taught music in school, my mom is a classical pianist, and my dad, who is mainly a tuba player, was conducting the band down at Disney World in Florida when I was born. Thank God he was transferred to the California Disneyland when I was six months old.

There was so much music in my house. My earliest memories are watching my dad conduct the big band and jazz band at Disneyland. I remember getting a trumpet for Christmas when I was six, and I played that for about four months. But my dad had an endorsement with the brass department at Yamaha, and somehow he also had a drumset from them, which was up in our attic. It was a Yamaha Recording series kit, which is a pretty extravagant first kit.

The earliest pictures of me playing were when I was seven or eight, standing, with huge '70s headphones on, with a snare drum and a cymbal, Stray Cats' Slim Jim Phantom style. That might have lasted about a month before I got the nerve to ask my parents if we could bring the whole drumset down from the attic.

I remember my dad sat down behind the drumset and played the simplest 4/4 beat,



and it sounded like a record to me. He told me to try it, and I was able to do it right away. I started playing to Van Halen, Queen, and Devo records. It's ironic that I've gotten to play with Devo; it's such a dream come true to play with people I've admired since I was in first grade.

I never really noticed that music and drumming was this big serious thing for me. But my mom remembers how I'd get up at 7:00 A.M. to call Zildjian on the East Coast before I went to school. I'd be talking shop with [veteran cymbal expert and then–artist relations manager] Lenny DiMuzio when I was in the fifth grade. I just think I had a lot of determination then and, really, I still feel that same drive now. I'm still trying to improve, and I never take anything for granted. It comes down to my feeling so fortunate that I can do what I love for a living. You don't have to be rich and famous to feel successful or feel good about your work.

I'm really happy about where I'm at and where I've been. Working with people like Devo and Paul Westerberg from The Replacements, people I've been a fan of, is much more important than working with whatever big names in music you can mention. I just recently got to play with a band I'm a huge fan of, Ween. I made less money on that record than I have on any other record I've done this year. But artistically and creatively it meant more to me than anything else.

MD: Why was this record so rewarding?

Josh: In 1993 I was twenty and on tour with Paul Westerberg. He's still probably my favorite songwriter on the planet. I remember coming home from that tour and one of my buddies from The Vandals, the punk/rock band I've played in since I was sixteen, said, "You've got to hear this tape." It was Ween. They had already put out two records before, but this third record was the first one on a major label. And even when they had the budget on a major label, they recorded on a four-track cassette. Here were these two young guys from the woods of Pennsylvania making this crazy modern-day Captain Beefheart/Frank Zappa music, but with even more of a smart-ass, punk-rock twist.

When I heard that record, I got so jealous that someone else was making that music, that these guys beat me to what I wanted to do as a songwriter and composer. A lot of their stuff is really out, and then they've also gone to Nashville and hired all the old-school musicians and made the most legit-sounding country record. They're very eclectic.

MD: What did they need from you as a drummer?

Josh: The circumstances as to why I had to play with them were unfortunate. Their drummer, Claude Coleman, got into an awful car wreck a few months ago. He's going to be okay, but he has no medical insurance. I had become friends with some of the guys in Ween over the last couple of years by going to their shows. They ended up calling me to fill in for two

shows at the Bowery Ballroom in New York, which were sold out, with the proceeds going to Claude.

I had a blast playing with Ween. They play forty songs a night that are completely mixed—one song is a legit-sounding country/Waylon Jennings–type tune, the next is a mock speed metal song, then Dixieland, Zeppelin, reggae, and even Captain Beefheart. The styles are all over the place, and the guys are really out approach-wise and lyrically.

MD: Bassist Scott Tunis was the one who really got you started appreciating that music.

Josh: Scott started me on the road of appreciating simple, soulful music and taught me that it doesn't have to be tricky—it doesn't have to be a circus act—to have validity. He taught me about the beauty of The Ramones and how important they are to popular music. I was thinking, "Really? The Ramones? How could this guy who can sightread all this crazy music tell me how important Dee Dee Ramone is as a bass player?" To this day, I carry that thought with me.

I would rather see someone play a Ramones' song spot-on, with heart and soul, than play some lick they learned out of a book, with all the chops in the world. Chops can be fantastic to watch, but they don't make the whole world tap their foot, cry, or get excited. Chops can make your jaw drop and your eyes widen for a few seconds, but the feeling in the heart is different.

Scott taught me the importance of everyone from Midnight Oil and The Butthole Surfers to The Sex Pistols. I had automatically discredited them in my mind because I was listening to jazz and fusion. But going through phases is part of the fun of being a teenager. One day you decide, "That band sucks, this is where it's at." And the next you decide, "That's not where it's at, *this* is." All the phases bring you finally to a point where you're not afraid to admit that you really liked this particular Tom Petty record. At nineteen or twenty, I wouldn't have told my punk-rock friends that. But Tom Petty, and people like Jim Keltner, Jeff Porcaro, Charlie Drayton, and Steve Jordan, are classic examples of how amazing playing can be without it being a circus act.

Scott Tunis taught me the beauty of a

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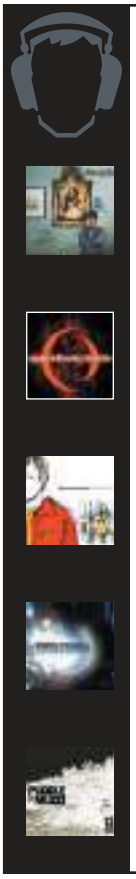
Josh Freese

guy playing 4/4, laying it down to the point where nothing else matters. That's when you shake your head half in disgust because it's so good and half in awe because you can't believe you're getting excited about someone playing a simple midtempo 4/4. That's not supposed to be hard, but to make it feel that way *is* hard.

An example of that happened to me recently in the studio. I often get called to play on a track or two of a band where I don't get credited, or sometimes it might say "additional percussion by Josh Freese," but I really played on the three singles on the record. Sometimes it's a band without a drummer, or they've fired the drummer in the middle of the record. I've been in every situation—the drummer is there and he's pissed off, or the drummer is there and he's excited that I'm going to help out, or the drummer isn't there and the rest of the band is trying to keep him away from the studio…. It's always some sort of weird political thing, and it's egos, friendships, and business.

I remember the first time *I* was replaced in the studio, about ten years ago, and it was done behind my back. I don't feel bad



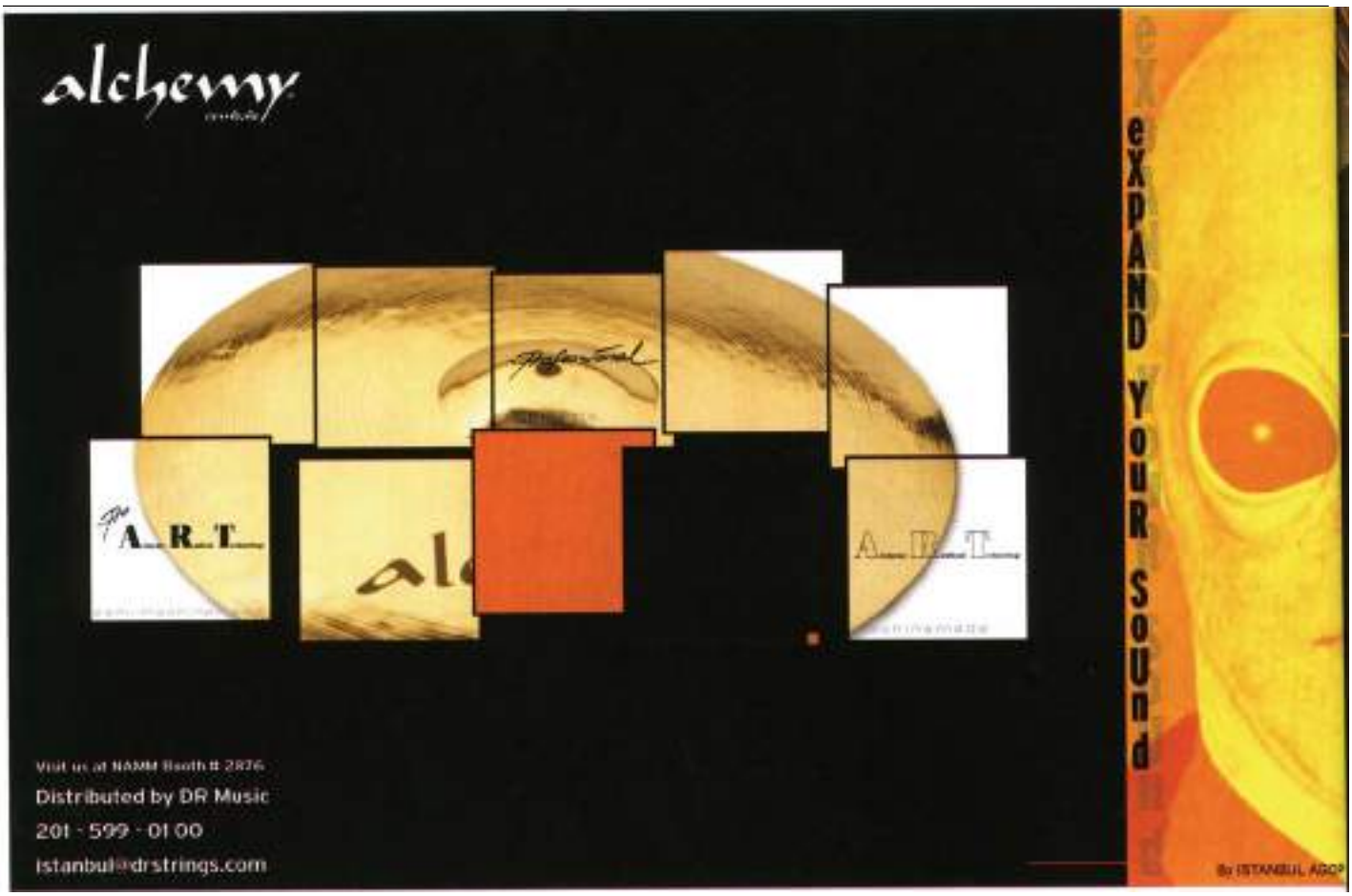
Tastee Freese

Recordings

Artist	Album
Abandoned Pools	Humanistic
A Perfect Circle	Mer de Noms
The Vandals	Internet Dating Superstuds
Viva Death	Viva Death
Chris Cornell	Euphoria Morning
Juliana Hatfield	Only Everything
Suicidal Tendencies	The Art Of Rebellion
Strip Search	Strip Search
Tracy Bonham	The Burdens Of Being Upright
Puddle Of Mudd	Come Clean

Favorites

Artist	Recording	Drummer
Devo	Duty Now For The Future	Alan Myers
Klark Kent	Kollected Works	Stewart Copeland
Fear	The Record	Spit Stix
Tool	Lateralus	Danny Carey
Frank Black	Teenager Of The Year	Nick Vincent
Keith Richards	Talk Is Cheap	Charlie Drayton, Steve Jordan
Missing Persons	Spring Session M	Terry Bozzio
Brad Mehldau	Largo	Jim Keltner, Matt Chamberlain, Victor Indrizzo, Jorge Rossy
Grandpaboy	Mono	Paul Westerberg
Frank Zappa	Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar	Vinnie Colaiuta



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about it now, because not only have I since replaced guys who I think are great, but at the time I was only twenty. I recorded a track, but the producer didn't have a check for me and told me to stop back whenever I was in the neighborhood to pick it up. This was someone I worked with all the time. So I pulled up to the studio the next day and heard live drums through the wall and thought, "Oh, he must be producing a band." I walked in and started chatting with the secretary and suddenly realized I recognized the song—it was the same one I had recorded. I didn't say anything and didn't make anyone feel uncomfortable. I left feeling kind of sad, with my ego bruised, but it was probably good for me. I probably thought I was hot stuff at the time, so it was good for me. Now I realize it doesn't mean that you didn't do a good job.

I called that producer a couple of days later and said I didn't want to put him on the spot, but I wanted to know what I did wrong. He explained that the artist felt the drums were tuned way too floppy and he wanted something a little more pop with a higher-pitched snare, and a little lighter approach. I still felt awful, but right around that same time—within a week—there was an article in *Modern Drummer* called "Getting Replaced In The Studio" with stories from guys like Jeff Porcaro, Jim Keltner, Denny Fongheiser, and Kenny Aronoff, and it made me feel better.

But back to my recent experience: I showed up at a studio to do four songs for a band making their first record on a major label. In the parking lot, I saw the drum tech, who I hadn't seen for a while, and asked him what the scene in the studio was. He said, "The funny thing is, the drummer is a really good drummer, but he just isn't working out on these songs." I don't want to say the drummer's name, but he was used to playing speed metal and he's amazing, and they were recording midtempo, slow songs. When I heard the tracks, I understood the problem right away, and the drummer was really open-minded and cool about the whole thing.

MD: Can you explain what they needed on this particular project?

Josh: They needed more space and choices of discretional fills. They needed someone who could do the "less is more" thing, which this other guy wasn't used to. He was always pushed to play as fast as he could with as many fills as possible.

I remember when I was younger going to a studio in Orange County and hearing that a legendary punk rock drummer from the Midwest had been there the night before, and they wanted him to play this simple groove and he couldn't do it. When you're a kid, you think, "Oh, that's easy, the hard stuff is playing fast and tricky." But it's that space in between the snare drum and where it lands that makes it feel the way it does.

My dad went to see Willie Nelson recently and came back exclaiming, "You won't believe what the drummer [Paul English] played—just a snare drum!" He stood there with a snare drum and a stand, playing brushes 80% of the time, playing the train feel, and on the ballads he took a stick and did a sidestick on beat 4. My dad said it grooved like crazy. That's hard to do. It's so exposed. Any discrepancy is obvious.

MD: It sounds like the moral of the story is that not everyone is perfect for every situation.

Josh: Exactly. It's like the sushi chef at the restaurant I love, who makes the most mind-boggling Japanese food I've ever had, trying to make a kick-ass burrito. He might suck at it, but that doesn't mean he isn't the most incredible Japanese chef you've ever encountered.

MD: To what do you attribute your success as a studio player?

Josh: I think it's a combination of being into a lot of different kinds of music and understanding a lot of different kinds of music, and being open to things. I still feel that I have a hunger and a fire inside of me. I'm not jaded. I mean, I've been touring since I was fifteen, so sometimes I roll my eyes about something. But I always catch myself. If I'm complaining about something, I'll laugh and go, "Why am I complaining about the food backstage? Who cares? I'm in New York City tonight, playing music for a living."

I think the fact that I still love playing music makes a difference. A lot of it, I think, has to do with the fact that I got less into the circus tricks and more into people like Keltner, Jordan, and Porcaro. I think what also was important for me was playing other instruments and songwriting. I'm just as inspired by songwriters as I am by drummers, which can't help but come out in my drumming.

It's important to draw inspiration from whatever you're inspired by. And it's important to understand what's going on around you, as far as what the bass player is doing, what the lyrics are saying, and what the guitarist is playing. Listening is all-important—listening to music in the car, going out and hearing people play, and then when you're in the studio, listening to what's going on around you and being supportive of that, being a team player rather than a hot dog. Get into country music, punk rock music, everything—Willie Nelson, The Ramones, Elvis Costello, Tom Petty. It's so important to be open.

To me, there aren't enough hours in the day for me to do what I want to do. Sometimes I feel narrow-minded; I'm not into sports or other things. Music is my hobby, my livelihood, my love. And there's a lot of stuff out there that I

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haven't even tapped yet that I know I will one day, like second-line drumming, New Orleans music, authentic jazz, and bebop.

MD: What happened with the Guns N' Roses gig?

Josh: When I got the call to go down and audition for Guns N' Roses, I was at a rehearsal place in LA doing pre-production for a record, and I had a message on my machine from their manager and thought, "What?!" I called him back, and he asked me if I wanted to audition. But it seemed too big, like a bigger-than-life band. I had a lot of things going on at the time, so I said, "I don't know, it seems very time-consuming. I've got to think about it. I don't want to waste your time if it isn't something I really want to do." He was cool about that, but he was persistent. A couple of days later he said, "Just come down and meet with Axl and the guys."

I went down and auditioned for them, sick as a dog—I had eaten some bad seafood in London right before that, gotten on a plane, and auditioned that night. I was vomiting all the way to the rehearsal. Axl was totally cool, though, and very

Congratulations Josh Freese!

It's been great working on these projects with you…

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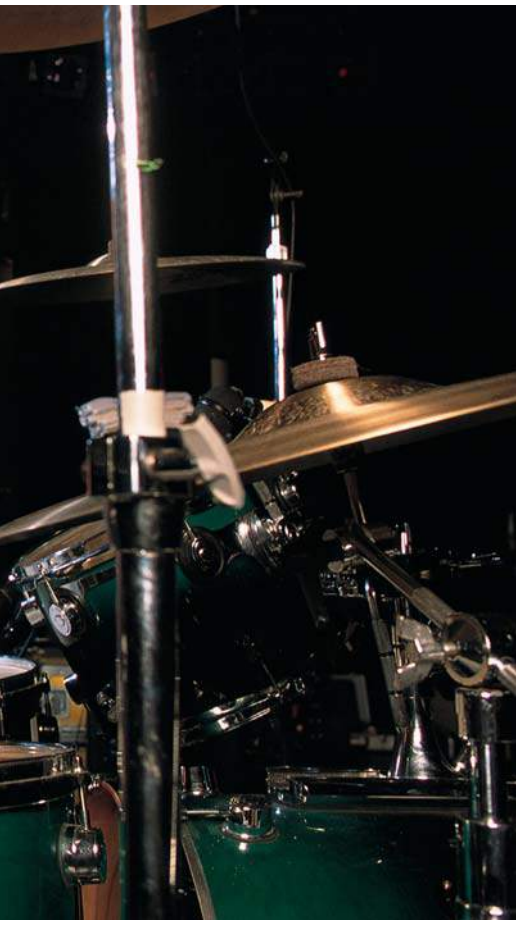

open-minded about music. He said, "I heard you played with Devo. I really liked Devo—and when *I* liked Devo, you got beat up for liking Devo." I thought, "This guy is really cool." It became obvious that he really listens to music. He was talking about artists all over the map.

They invited me down a second time, and from the beginning Axl was so nice and we got along and had a good time. He was completely open. So I decided to join. But as we started working together, things began taking such a long time—way too long for my taste. I got impatient and started thinking I wanted to do something else.

In '97, when I was playing with Devo on the Lollapalooza tour, I had met Maynard [James Keenan] from Tool, and we became friends. One of the guys who was working with Axl on Pro Tools was Billy Howerdel. One day Billy said to me, "My roommate says he knows you." It turned out to be Maynard, and we started saying "hi" to each other through Billy. One day Maynard said, "Josh writes good music—heavy music meets The Cocteau Twins or The Cure. It's pretty linear and experimental to a degree while still staying in a pop realm. You should check it out." That was the beginning of A Perfect Circle.

Maynard was busy with Tool, Billy and I were busy with Guns N' Roses, but Billy ended up leaving, and I really liked the music we were doing together. And Maynard found the time as well. We were working at a friend's home studio on spec, doing drum tracks there. Billy had a Pro Tools rig at his house and would do the overdubs there, so we were making a record without having a deal or even a name for the band. It started as a weekend project, but before we knew it, we said, "We've got a record."

I really thought what we had were just demos, but that may be half the reason the drum tracks turned out so great. There was no pressure in a big studio with a producer or an A&R person. We were just hanging out at our friend's house, and we'd have a few hours to do it. I'd say, "I really want to redo those drums someday," and Billy would say, "Oh no, I love the fact that there's a big huge fill after the first line of the first verse, where it's not

supposed to be. It's pretty cool. I want to leave it that way."

Well, we got a record deal with Virgin and a great mixer to mix what we recorded mostly in Billy's garage, our friend's house, and Sound City, where we did some of the drums. We figured out a name for the band, and all of a sudden we were on tour with Nine Inch Nails, doing arenas, a month before the album was to come out. When the album did come out, "Judith" became a hit, and we were all wondering how it happened. It was amazing. We had the highest-charting album by a debuting band ever. Our record entered the charts at number 4, and we sold something like 180,000 copies in the first week.

So A Perfect Circle was really what was behind my leaving Guns N' Roses. I had to get out and play. I had been in the studio for a couple of years, and to Axl's credit, he knows what he wants to hear, and he doesn't want to put out anything less than incredible. In March of 2000, when I left, I knew the record was still far away from coming out. And since I had the opportunity to do something with friends I liked and music I loved, I had to leave. And frankly, I'm really proud of A Perfect Circle.

After that record, we knew Maynard would have to go back to Tool, and they put out *Lateralus* and went on tour for about a year and a half, selling out everywhere. During that time Billy has built a great home studio, we've got a ton of tracks done, and Maynard sends us lyrics to the songs. We send stuff out to him and he'll write to it, so he's been working on it while he's been on tour. Once again, we're making a record without really knowing we're making a record. We're shooting for our album to come out in the next few months. Then we'll go on the road this summer.

And as an offshoot of A Perfect Circle, Maynard and I did another project called Tapeworm, which is a collaboration between Maynard, me, and Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails. We went down to Southern Tracks in Atlanta to cut the drums, and now Trent is finishing everything at his studio in New Orleans.

MD: You've also been on tour with The Vandals recently supporting *Internet Dating Superstuds*. After so many years, the band still seems very important to you.

Josh: The Vandals are like home to me. I recently had an opportunity to join a new band for a ton of money—more money than I've ever made, times two. But I wasn't in love with the material. To stop everything that I love doing and put my reputation on the line by saying, "This is what I'm about, 110%," well, I couldn't do it. A friend of mine said to me, "Even though you're not making nearly that amount of money, you're doing well doing exactly what you want to do. Why go make more money doing something you don't want to do?" That was a great point.

The Vandals are like my social time, too. It's a business and it's music, but socially it's really rewarding too. They are three of my closest friends on the planet. We go to Australia twice a year and Europe three times a year. We don't sell millions of records, but it's been an underground band that has toured the world, put out a bunch of records, and been successful on a decent level. As my dad recently put it, "The Vandals are so good for your head. Some guys play poker, some guys go fishing with their friends on the weekend, and you play in The Vandals." That's the truth.

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Ben Perowsky
Beyond Labels

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Paul La Raia

The scene: a cold night in Williamsburg, Brooklyn at NorthSix, a multi-level hole-in-the-wall juke joint where the bathroom graffiti is more political than obscene. Attracting a crowd of Manhattan intellectuals and Brooklyn Deadheads, NorthSix is tonight showcasing Ben Perowsky's Moodswing Orchestra. A collection of nutnik New York City musicians, including Perowsky on drums, percussion, and electronics, Steven Bernstein (trumpet), Oren Bloedow (bass), MarKus Miller (turntables/electronics), Glenn Patscha (Wurlitzer piano), and Marcus Rojas (tuba), Moodswing covers every base and then some. The group blows through all manner of Martian landscapes and insane-asylum atmospheres. Just don't call it jazz. (The dreaded "J" word comes up later.) Earlier in the night, Perowsky worked the same room with Elysian Fields, his longtime groove gig, a chance to play it clean under sinister vocals and simpler pop structures. But for Ben Perowsky, nothing is as simple as it seems.

Gigs:

Mike Stern
Uri Caine
Walter Becker
Steven Bernstein
Rickie Lee Jones
John Scofield
Bob Berg
Pat Martino
Salif Keita
Lost Tribe
Gongzilla

With his latest album, *Bop On Pop*, Perowsky teams with his dad, saxophonist Frank Perowsky, and organist Sam Yahel. The album is a beautiful throwback, a sensuous, swinging, svelte slice of organ trio jazz that shakes like wicked 1950s New York City burlesque and floats beautifully like Willis Jackson or Jack McDuff. Ben is a monster throughout, but a gentle one. If you know the thirty-six-year-old New York City native for his recordings with Mike Stern, you know he can swing. But with his dad and the glowing organ of Yahel, Ben burns on a different level. You can hear great depth and maturity in his drumming, but in particular you hear his ability to stretch and explore with remarkable ease, all while absolutely swinging the idiom.

A few nights earlier on a Steven Bernstein gig, Ben played a solo that worked a call-and-response motif, alternating blazing full-set tribal rhythms with gentle-as-the-wind snare drum shadings. After his solo, Bernstein and crew kicked it with Dixieland. But is that jazz?

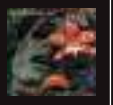
And what about his work with avant-garde pianist Uri Caine on Perowsky's own *Camp Songs*? Here Perowsky rides a rhythm roller coaster on such songs as "Yigdal" and "Messhall," culminating in round-robin phrase interaction allowing him to source everything from Art Blakey to South Indian drumming. But is *that* jazz?

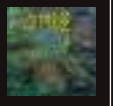
Or what about Perowsky's work with Steely Dan's Walter Becker (*11 Tracks Of Whack*), or Rickie Lee Jones? Okay, so Ben has worked and recorded with hardcore jazzers like John Scofield, Dave Douglas, Bob Berg, Dave Kikoski, and Pat Martino. But to catch his big drift you have to consider other records with African master Salif Keita, funk fusioneers Lost Tribe, and prog-rock titans Gongzilla. Those gigs aren't jazz either, right?

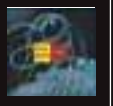
And lest we forget, Perowsky worked his own seminal drums 'n' electronica outfit, Liminal, years before drum 'n' bass blew out of the UK. At the NorthSix gigs, he combined the sweet jangle of Engelhart Percussion bells with the woozy, interstellar sound of sampled bells, confusing even trained ears.

Currently engrossed in launching his Moodswing Orchestra to a wider unsuspecting public and working the occasional trio gig with his dad, Ben Perowsky answers the old Frank Zappa saw, "Is there humor in music?" Ben Perowsky keeps his sense of humor close at hand, only secondary to his massive skills at making music.

“When you call me ‘a jazz guy,’ I get wigged. I don’t want to be put into a box like that. I’m never happy in just one thing.”







Bop On Ben

Recordings:

Artist	Disc
Ben Perowsky	Bop On Pop
Ben Perowsky	Ben Perowsky Trio
Ben Perowsky	Camp Songs
Dave Douglas	Magic Triangle
Dave Douglas	Leap Of Faith
Uri Caine	Sidewalks Of New York
Elysian Fields	Queen Of The Meadow
Lost Tribe	Soulfish
Lost Tribe	Many Lifetimes
Mike Stern	Play
Mike Stern	Is What It Is
Walter Becker	11 Tracks Of Whack

Favorites:

Artist	Recording	Drummer
Jimi Hendrix	Smash Hits	Mitch Mitchell
Blonde Redhead	Melody Of Certain Damaged Lemons	Simone Pace
The Band	Music From Big Pink	Levon Helm
PJ Harvey	Dry	Rob Ellis
Miles Davis	Miles Smiles	Tony Williams
Changui (similar to son music, recorded live in Cuba)	Ramnad Krishnan	Vidwan (from South India)
John Lennon	Imagine	Jim Keltner, Jim Gordon, Alan White
Art Blakey	Big Beat	Art Blakey

For more info on Ben, check out his Web site at www.perowsky.com.

MD: You're involved in so many projects, some of which cross jazz with electronica.

Ben: I don't know that it's coming from jazz. That kind of cut-and-paste thing is happening across the board in all genres, from Radiohead to Bjork. I don't know who is influencing whom. I think it's cross-pollinization.

MD: It seems more radical somehow for trained, legit musicians to jump into this cross-pollinization. It makes jazz musicians, who are branded anyway, seem even more outside the norm. People still consider you a jazz musician, don't they?

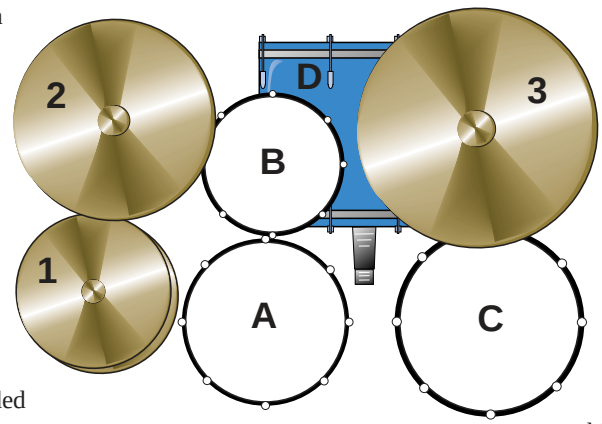
Ben: They do, no matter how hard I try to shake it. But then, I keep putting out jazz records. What are you gonna do? The pop in *Bop On Pop* is my dad. I still have my foot in the traditional thing, but I actually haven't been doing that lately. It's not where my head is, but I really wanted to make a record with my dad. We've talked about it for so long.

The disc sounds so classic because of my dad. He comes right out of that '50s New York thing. He's the real deal. He played with Woody Herman, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, and Buddy Rich, as well as Philly Joe Jones.

MD: It must have been helpful to have a professional musician as a parent.

Ben: I played drums with him when I was five years old. I could barely reach the pedals. We played a lot of duets. We would both be practicing in the house, and then we'd play tunes together. That's a big part of how I learned standards. He was very supportive, and I had access to all of his records. But I didn't really know to check them out until Bobby Thomas told me to. He was a family friend and a drummer. Bobby played with Wes Montgomery, Hubert Laws, Eddie Harris, Billy Taylor, and many others. I remember that he pulled out three records for me to focus on: Miles Davis's *Milestones* and *Cookin'* and Art Blakey's *Big Beat*.

I was a little slow to tap into my dad's music. When I was a teenager I was into Zeppelin and Hendrix. It wasn't until later that I learned where he was coming from and then started playing gigs with him. Rock came before jazz for me.



Perowsky's Palette

Drums: various
A. 6½x14 Ludwig metal snare
B. 10x12 Gretsch rack tom
C. 16x16 Ludwig floor tom
D. 18x20 Pearl maple-shell bass drum (20x24 Contemporanea surdo also used as bass drum)

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" A New Beat hi-hats
2. 19" A Custom crash
3. 22" A ride (1970s era)

Miscellaneous: Vic Firth American Sound 8D model sticks, 1971 Pearl Syncussion (drum synth) triggered by Roland pads, Pete Engelhart Percussion bells.

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Ben Perowsky

MD: But you play in so many different situations stylistically. Do your real roots lie in Hendrix or Elvin?

Ben: I came up listening to the radio and my brother's rock 'n' roll records. I was in love with The Beatles, and Keith Moon and John Bonham were big influences too. Then later, Hendrix led me to jazz. I heard Jack DeJohnette in the group Gateway. Like Hendrix, they were playing and stretching out, but it wasn't fusion. I went backwards from there, going back to check out the jazz masters. My dad saw that I was getting into it, so he put on *Miles Smiles* with Tony Williams on drums. When I heard that, I was amazed. At that point I started going backwards to bebop and checking out the roots.

MD: Did you start practicing more?

Ben: Yes. Bobby started coming over to the house, and we pulled out the jazz records. I started practicing a lot and playing along with the records. And Bobby worked on my cymbal beat. He would say, "Play with the bass, check out how Wynton Kelly swings. Sing with the solos. You're the drummer, play with Miles, play with Coltrane, play with everyone."

Bobby had gone to Juilliard, so he got me into everything. We did rudiments and reading, and he told me what to listen for. I also really worked on shuffles. I would play shuffles through a lot of those jazz records, just to develop a good feel. Shuffles are where it all comes from—that's the roots. Like Basie, you accent the 2 and 4 and keep the four on the floor. A lot of drummers don't have that together.

Later on, when I was in Boston, I studied with Alan Dawson at Berklee. But I would still see Bobby all the time. And back then, in the early '80s, I used to go to the clubs in New York all the time. I went to Mikells, Sweet Basil, Lush Life, the Blue Note….

MD: Did you see Steve Gadd play at Mikells?

Ben: I would see Gadd through the window at Mikells, which was a block from my house. He was great. I saw Weckl there later on. But it was really Art Blakey I was checking out around that time. Every time The Jazz Messengers played in town, I was there. I would see Jaco Pastorius at 55 Grand Street, and I saw a lot of Billy Hart and Al Foster. They worked with everybody. I saw Al with Miles Davis and Tommy Flanagan. When Al made the Joe Henderson live records at the Vanguard, I was there. Al is a giant of a player. Later, Joey Baron became a big influence.

MD: After being in New York, did you have to adjust to Berklee?

Ben: I also went to Music And Arts High School in New York. Gene Lake was there at the same time. Gene and I would go to clubs at night and then work on what we heard the next day at school. School and the clubs were intertwined for me. It wasn't formalized.

As for Berklee, it was very cliquey—these guys play with those guys, and those guys play with these guys. And there

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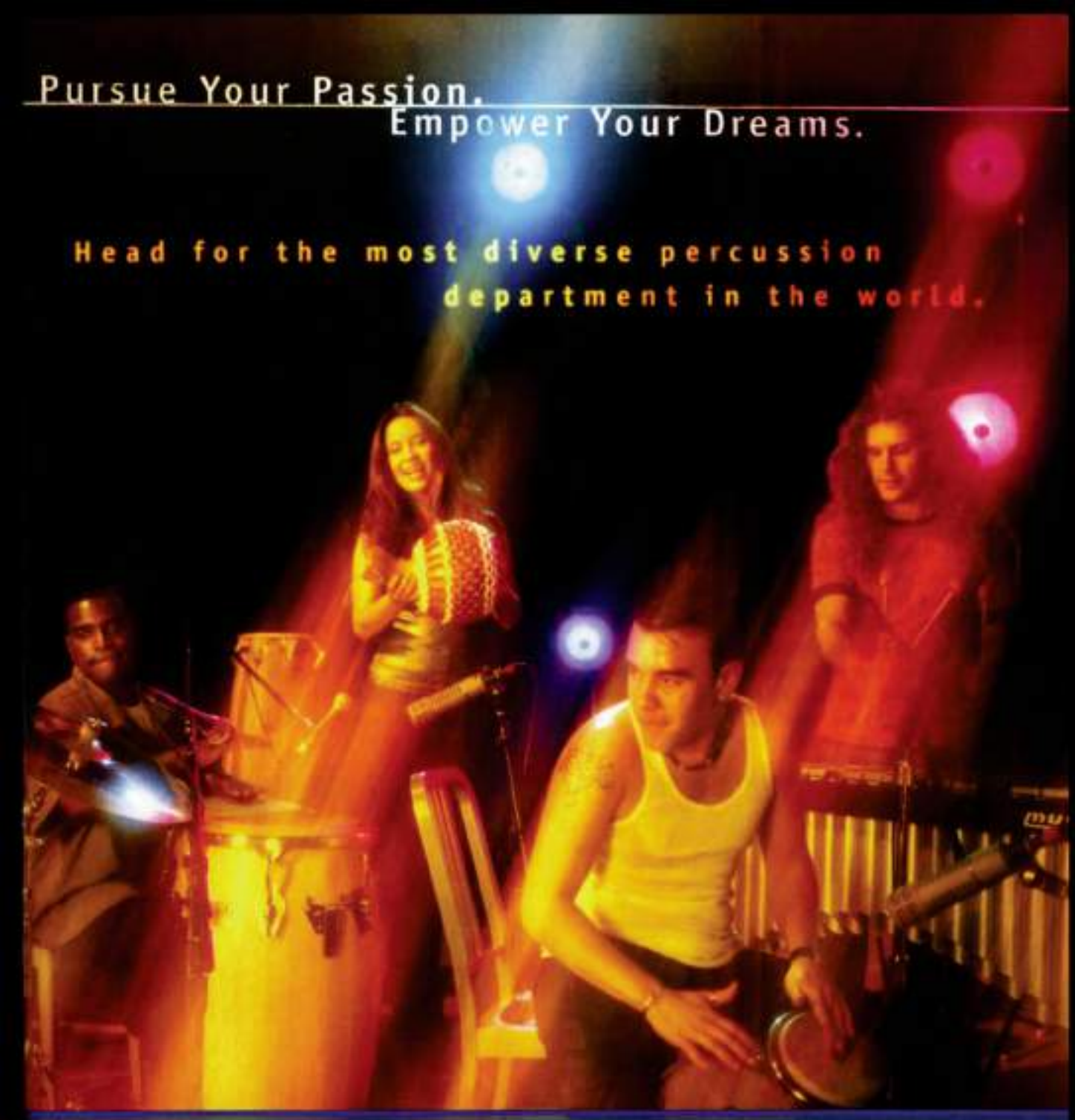

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wasn't a lot of mixture, racially. But I went up there specifically because my dad hooked me up with Alan Dawson, even though he wasn't teaching at Berklee then. But Berklee was a good place to practice, and I met a lot of good players up there.

MD: Was the testing at Berklee a good tool?

Ben: It was just a method to place kids in the right group so they wouldn't lag behind. I was a little advanced when I got there. I already had a lot of things together. But the testing is good. It puts you in a room with guys on your level. You learn from each other.

MD: After the two years at Berklee, did you come back to New York a changed player?

Ben: I had more experience, more everything. Dawson gave me a lot more vocabulary technically. He had this method, which was very ritualized. He called it "The Rudiment Ritual." He linked together twenty-six or more rudiments that you play on the snare, but with brushes. He also had this way of working with George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control* and Ted Reed's *Syncopation*. He worked the rudiments into *Syncopation* and had you sing a song while doing it. You'd learn form, rudiments, chops, and reading simultaneously. That was embarrassing, having to sing out loud at the lessons. But Dawson taught Tony Williams, so I went with it.

MD: When you came back to New York City from Berklee in 1986, did you notice cliques of musicians based around race? And have things changed?

Ben: The '80s were a funny time for that kind of stuff, especially in the jazz world. It got real cliquey. People started putting on suits. The more it got that way, the more I didn't want to have anything to do with it.

MD: You don't like suits?

Ben: I like old, *vintage* suits. [laughs] But growing up in New York City and going to Music And Arts, I was in a little bubble. In high school, everyone played with everyone else. We were all friends. But in the real world it's not like that. The people in my band are my friends, not because I don't want to be friends with other guys, but society doesn't push people together. I like it when it's all mixed up.

MD: Is it easier for drummers to do that? For instance, Brian Blade plays with everyone.

Ben: I'm always crossing those lines. One of my first gigs after Berklee was with Roy Ayers. Then I worked with James Moody. A year later I was on tour with Rickie Lee Jones. Later on I worked with John Scofield, who was really supportive and one of the best bandleaders I've ever worked for. But as far as the race thing, I don't think it's the music or the musicians shaping it, it's society. Music is the one place where all of that doesn't have to happen.

MD: There's a lot of divergence on your résumé. Are all of these gigs the same for you?

Ben: No. The music for Elysian Fields is coming from a completely different world from Uri Caine. Uri's gig is an avant-garde trio that incorporates free jazz and bop. It has nothing to do with John Lennon songwriting, which Elysian Fields is about. Those two worlds don't collide. I think Ringo and Jim Keltner on one side, and Jack DeJohnette on the other.

MD: Why did Afro-pop star Salif Keita

call you to work with him?

Ben: He wanted more rock grooves on the album I did with him, which was called *Papa*.

MD: And can you tell me about your recording experience with Steely Dan's Walter Becker for his disc *11 Tracks Of Whack*? Is he different from other people you've worked with?

Ben: Yes, simply because he is such a legend. Also, it was nice to work in his studio in Hawaii. When I did that record, Steely Dan hadn't made their comeback yet. His doing a solo record is what led to their reunion. But Walter never came down on me or told me what to play. If he did want to hear a certain thing, he didn't say it. You'd find out later when the record came out, when you weren't on the track and he used a drum machine instead! [laughs]

MD: You keep on evolving. Your playing has changed a lot since Lost Tribe and the early Mike Stern records.

Ben: It's nice to hear that people think I'm getting better. I still practice. In the last few years I've really been checking out South Indian drumming. I've been trying to apply that stuff to the drumkit. To do that, I feel like I've had to go back to square one technically. But I want to get into the very odd phrasings you hear in that music.

MD: Has working on that stuff affected your jazz drumming?

Ben: Oh yeah. It's opened me up. If I'm hearing some wild pattern, I can do it. That's the ultimate for me.

MD: On tunes such as "Yigdal" and "Messhall," from your forthcoming record, *Camp Songs*, your soloing is very fluid, tribal, and powerful. You sound very free. Has working on the South Indian concepts helped to get rid of drumming clichés and other drummers' licks in your playing?

Ben: Yes, though I never tried to figure out drummers' licks. I was at a Gadd clinic once and a kid asked, "What did you play on bar seventeen of 'Leprechaun?'" I mean, you have to be joking.

MD: Are there other ways to play in the moment, to free yourself of old habits?

Ben: That is such a mental game. When I'm reacting in the moment, I'm not thinking about anything else. I'm focused, but I don't have any game plan in order to get there, and I'm not repeating ideas. When that happens, I feel lucky.

MD: Pat Metheny once told me that he had played with many of the greats, and that they all repeated themselves.

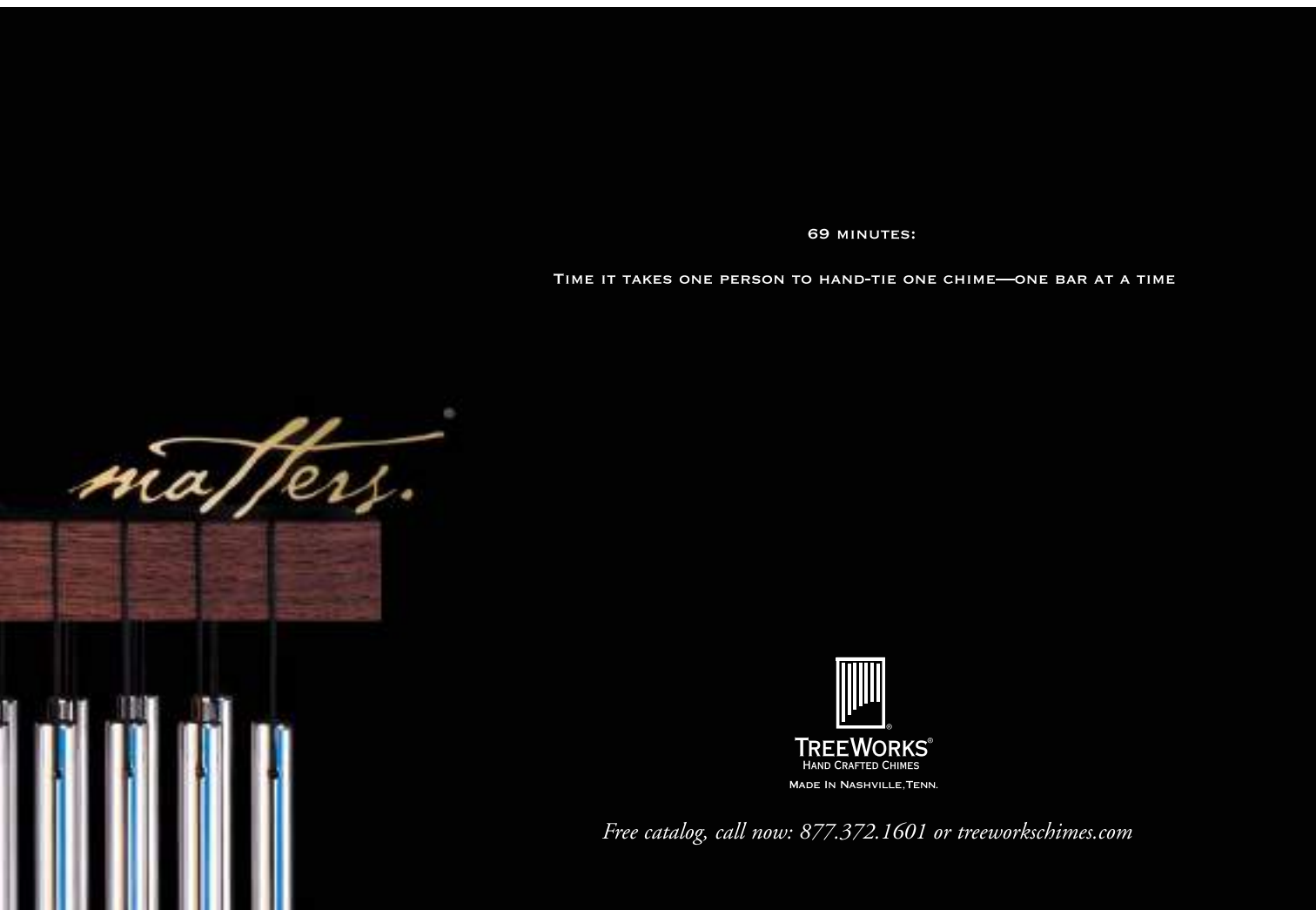
Ben: That's good to hear! [laughs] Sometimes, if I'm falling into a rut, I just try to mentally change the channel. "I don't want to do that again. I'll try *this*." Miles Davis was the master of getting out of that and forcing things into a different direction. I find myself doing that in my band. It's nice to be in the driver's seat, because I can make a sharp left turn and inspire the other players to go with me.

MD: So in your band they have to listen to you.

Ben: Hey, it's *my* band. [laughs] I can change the direction if I want to.

MD: On the gig I saw you do with Steven Bernstein, you were soloing using a call-and-response theme. It almost sounded like two different drummers playing. What's happening there?

Ben: I set up a motif and came back to it. I set up a rhythmic thing, then went to a different part of the kit, and then came



back to the motif. That's one of my soloing techniques.

What's funny is, in the past couple of years I haven't been in playing situations where I was called on to play a long solo, where the other musicians would leave the stage. I did that years ago when I was with Mike Stern. I came into that gig after Dennis Chambers, and they were used to him playing a solo for twenty minutes, and they wanted that to happen. It gave them some breathing room. But I couldn't solo for as long as Dennis did. And even *he* did that thing in the middle of his solo where he wiped his head with a towel while playing the double pedal. But that wasn't my style. So I started setting up motifs and trying to make something musical out of that.

MD: You're a great soloist, even though I don't think many people associate you with that. You play really interesting solos that are free of clichés.

Ben: Thanks. Soloing is fun and a challenge, but the grooves I play in Elysian Fields are just as important to me.

MD: Is Elysian Fields your rock and groove outlet?

Ben: It's more of a songwriting outlet. They're great songwriters, which is inspiring. It's been a good experience for me, and we're in the process of making a new record.

MD: You play so many types of gigs, but as a jazz drummer are you looking for a more "name" gig?

Ben: First of all, when you call me a "jazz guy," I get wigged. I don't want to be put into a box like that. I'm never happy in just one thing. I don't want to just play jazz or rock or this or that. As for doing a "name" gig, I've been fortunate to have done a few. So long as I can keep doing many different things and playing with good musicians, I'll be happy.

MD: Why do so many musicians that are trained in jazz not want to be called jazz musicians?

Ben: For me, it's just too small of a heading to cover everything I do. But maybe in ten years, if I do another record like this one with my dad, I'll say, "The heck with it, I *am* a jazz musician."

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The Yellowjackets' Marcus Baylor

Spirit Provider

Story by Robin Tolleson • Photos by Paul La Raia

It took a good bit of determination on Marcus Baylor's part to become a professional drummer. Growing up as the fifth and youngest child in the home of a Pentecostal apostolic minister in St. Louis meant that his parents did not approve of his efforts to listen to "secular" music. It's been many miles, but not that many years, since Marcus Baylor was sneaking out of his house at night to hear live jazz or funk, the "music of the devil," so to speak. And sneak he did. Now after stints with Cassandra Wilson, John Scofield, and Kenny Garrett, he finds himself holding down one of the most visible drum chairs in jazz with The Yellowjackets.

According to Baylor, "My earliest influences were artists like the gospel group Commissioned (with Fred Hammond) and The Winans. There wasn't any other music allowed in my house, so gospel music was everything. I grew up playing in churches. I started at the age of two playing drums in my dad's church and at tent revivals."

In the eighth grade Baylor heard The Yellowjackets' *Greenhouse* album, and was mightily impressed by drummer Will Kennedy. "Man, it was amazing," Marcus admits. "I'd never heard anything like that before. I snuck that album into the house, and was able to listen to the track they did with Take Six called 'Revelation.' That was my first influence as far as jazz goes."

Bill Maxwell, drummer/producer with Andre Crouch and other Christian acts, was also an early inspiration. "Bill was a hero of mine," Baylor says, "because he played in a great band called Koinonia. I was blessed to be exposed to jazz and other music, and once I got in my high school band I started hearing even more jazz, going to the library and checking out records. When I finally went to a club and saw it live, I thought, Man, this is going to be a major challenge, because I see the backbeat on 2 and 4 on the snare drum shifting to 2 and 4 on the hi-hat, and the independence and everything. They were all playing really fast, uptempo straight-ahead.

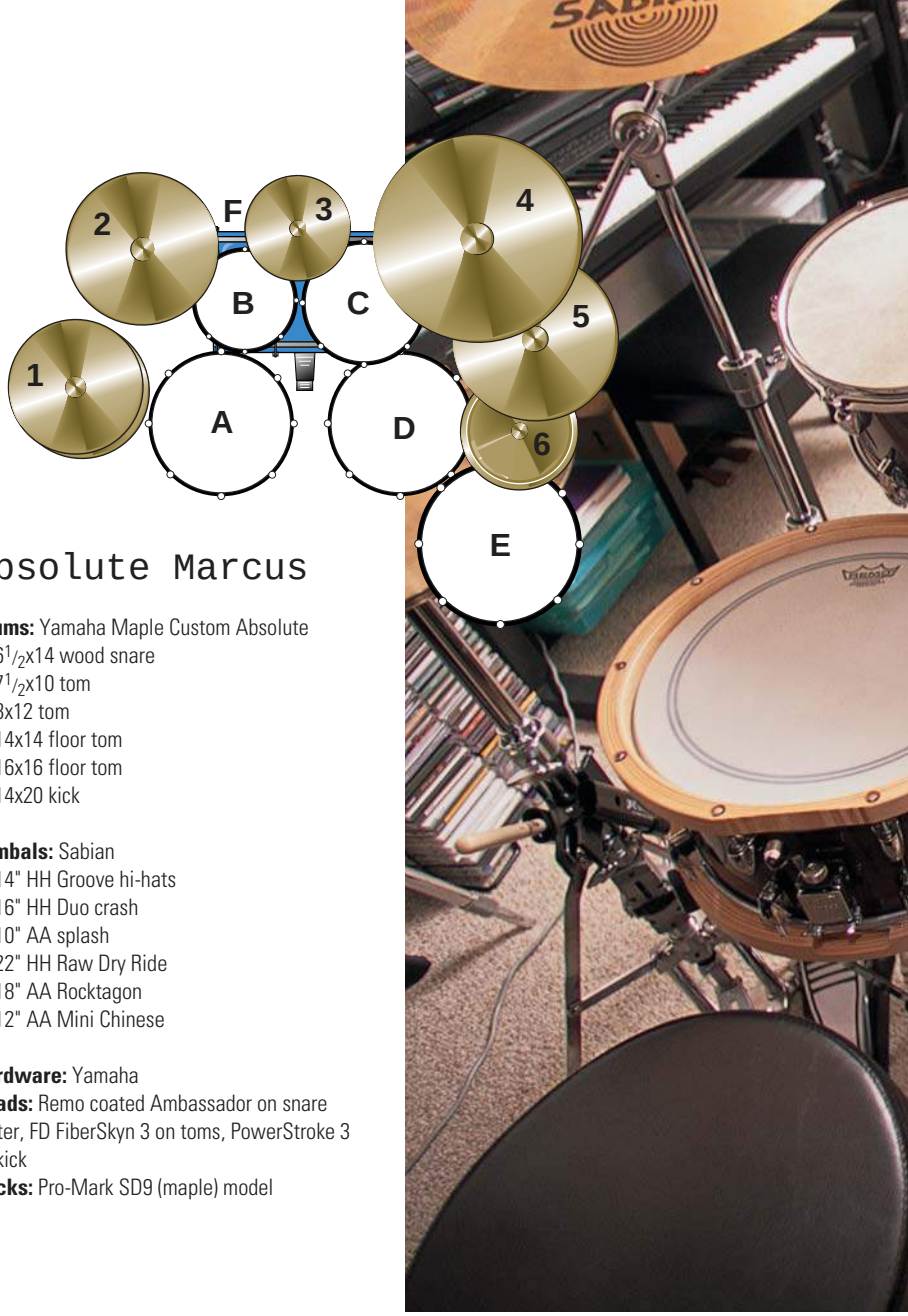
"So I started going back to the clubs," Marcus continues, "and then later on I started sitting in. I was practicing at church and at home, trying to sneak in as much as I could. Next I was sneaking out of the house to go play jazz gigs. I don't encourage anybody to sneak around so much, but it was all a blessing from God. It was just my path."

After high school, Baylor received a performance scholarship to the New School (Mannes Music School) in New York City. "That opened up a lot of doors," he says. Among Baylor's teachers were Horacee Arnold, Buster Williams, and Lewis Nash. The young drummer also went back and studied players like Jimmy Cobb, Philly Joe Jones, Kenny Clarke, Art Blakey, Vernell Fournier, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams.

"Michael Carvin taught me about drummers dealing with sounds," Marcus recalls. "I also studied a lot out of the Jim Chapin book *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer*. I studied it traditionally, learning what the note values are and the patterns. But after that it was time to break it up. For instance, I would play the snare drum part on the bass drum. That way you start getting your brain to think in different ways.

"The Chapin book helped me out so much," Baylor continues. "When I go to a gig I don't want to think about what I'm going to play. Some people think the Chapin book teaches you to play awkward stuff, but it actually teaches you to think with all four limbs. So when a horn player plays a rhythm, I'm able to react to it."

Baylor has always had a keen ear for dynamics and colors, and he's taken the time to work on the rudiments and learn how to strike the drum. "If I'm playing a jazz café and the owner really wants it



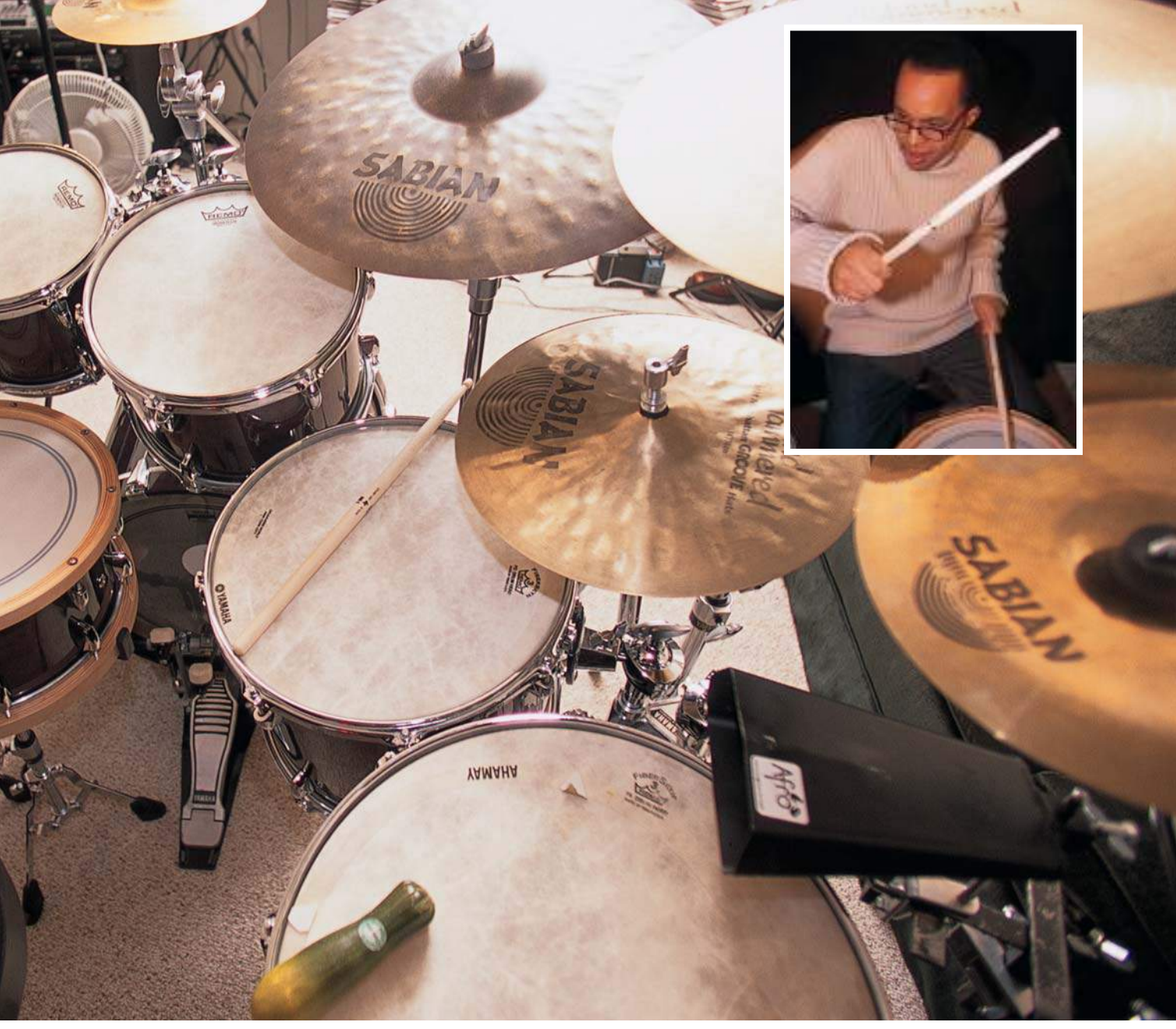
Absolute Marcus

Drums: Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute
A. 6½x14 wood snare
B. 7½x10 tom
C. 8x12 tom
D. 14x14 floor tom
E. 16x16 floor tom
F. 14x20 kick

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 14" HH Groove hi-hats
2. 16" HH Duo crash
3. 10" AA splash
4. 22" HH Raw Dry Ride
5. 18" AA Rocktagon
6. 12" AA Mini Chinese

Hardware: Yamaha
Heads: Remo coated Ambassador on snare batter, FD FiberSkyn 3 on toms, PowerStroke 3 on kick
Sticks: Pro-Mark SD9 (maple) model

"Some people say that play



if you're a Christian you can't

soft," he says, "I still want to be aggressive up there. I want to play without feeling like, Oh man, I've got to hold back. So I learned how to choke up on the stick. If you choke up on the stick you can hit with the same power and aggression but the sound is softer."

After attending school in New York, Baylor did a gig with bassist Lonnie Plaxico, and then was invited to audition for Cassandra Wilson's band. He ended up staying with Wilson for a year and a half, during which he recorded four tracks on her *Traveling Miles* album. Baylor creates a smooth 3/4 funk on "Run The Voodoo Down," plays behind the vocalist like Russ Kunkel on the Joni Mitchell-ish "When The Sun," and swishes nice brushes on "Someday My Prince Will Come."

Baylor also performed with Dave Holland, and with John Scofield's electric funk and acoustic jazz bands. "I had a great time," Marcus says, "and they were all great learning experiences. I've been blessed to be able to play gospel, straight-ahead jazz, traditional, and more modern jazz with odd meters."

Marcus also considers his time with Kenny Garrett very important. The drummer was invited to the West Coast to play on Garrett's *Happy People* album, on the blistering "Song #8." "Kenny was a big influence on my life and career," Marcus states. "That was my first chance to really open up and play. He taught me a lot

about understanding phrasing, patterns, and rhythm."

Now twenty-six, Baylor has molded his influences—gospel, R&B, funk, rock, and jazz—into his own approach to the instrument, still keeping one foot firmly planted in the church. Baylor and his wife, singer Jean Norris, sometimes get to work on gospel, R&B, or jazz music together. "That helps keep me on top of my sensitivity," Marcus says. "We'll do a duo gig sometimes. But it's always good to have a reference of where I came from. In the church, accompanying the choir or a singer, you can't be overbearing. I know that's where my sensitivity comes from."

Baylor sometimes seems to be "painting" his cymbals. His technique is spare, judicious, and passionate. "The way I look at my technique," he states, "is it's more about sounds, not just hitting the drums. Once I got the chance to play a lot, I started listening to textures and drummers that had a tapestry that dealt with sound—Peter Erskine, Steve Gadd, and Brian Blade. Those guys are definitely big influences. So my thing was to try to blend all of those different influences together—gospel, funk, jazz, and Latin. I love all of it."

One day Baylor returned from a rehearsal at Kenny Garrett's house to find three messages waiting for him, all from various Yellowjackets. "One was from Russell [Ferrante, keyboardist], one from Jimmy [Haslip, bassist], and another from Bob Mintzer [sax]. I thought, This has to be a prank. But they sent me a bunch of CDs, and for a couple of days I just listened, practiced, and took care of business. It amazed me how relaxed they were about me coming in. It was a blessing that they opened up their arms and made it real comfortable. They always made me feel like a part of the band. I remember the first practice; it was about an hour, and we went over thirteen tunes. It was like, 'Next.'

"It's been inspiring to be part of a legacy that's been around more than twenty years," Baylor continues. "And a lot of other doors have opened because of it. But I always try to keep a level head and a humble attitude. There are so many great musicians out there, I'm just one who was blessed to have an opportunity, and it worked out."

Baylor seems to be comfortable but not complacent in his role as the Yellowjackets' drummer. Whether holding the rudder firm underneath the unison detailings of Russ Ferrante and Bob Mintzer on the funky waltz "Song For Carla," or scampering sprite-like with Jimmy Haslip on "Tortoise And The Hare," Marcus brings his own sound and approach to the group. "I can't play what worked last night over Bob's solo tonight," he smiles. "Each night is different with The Yellowjackets. You've got to begin to build it up, and you need a vocabulary dealing with touch and working with different instruments. I want to become part of the tapestry of sound. I'll listen to the breeze and try to play along with that as if it's another instrument.

"Instead of me bashing over it," Marcus continues, "I try to blend in, articulate the sound of an orchestra from the drumset. That's why I love Brian Blade so much. I saw him with Wayne Shorter, and they played with an orchestra. He was still able to play like Brian,

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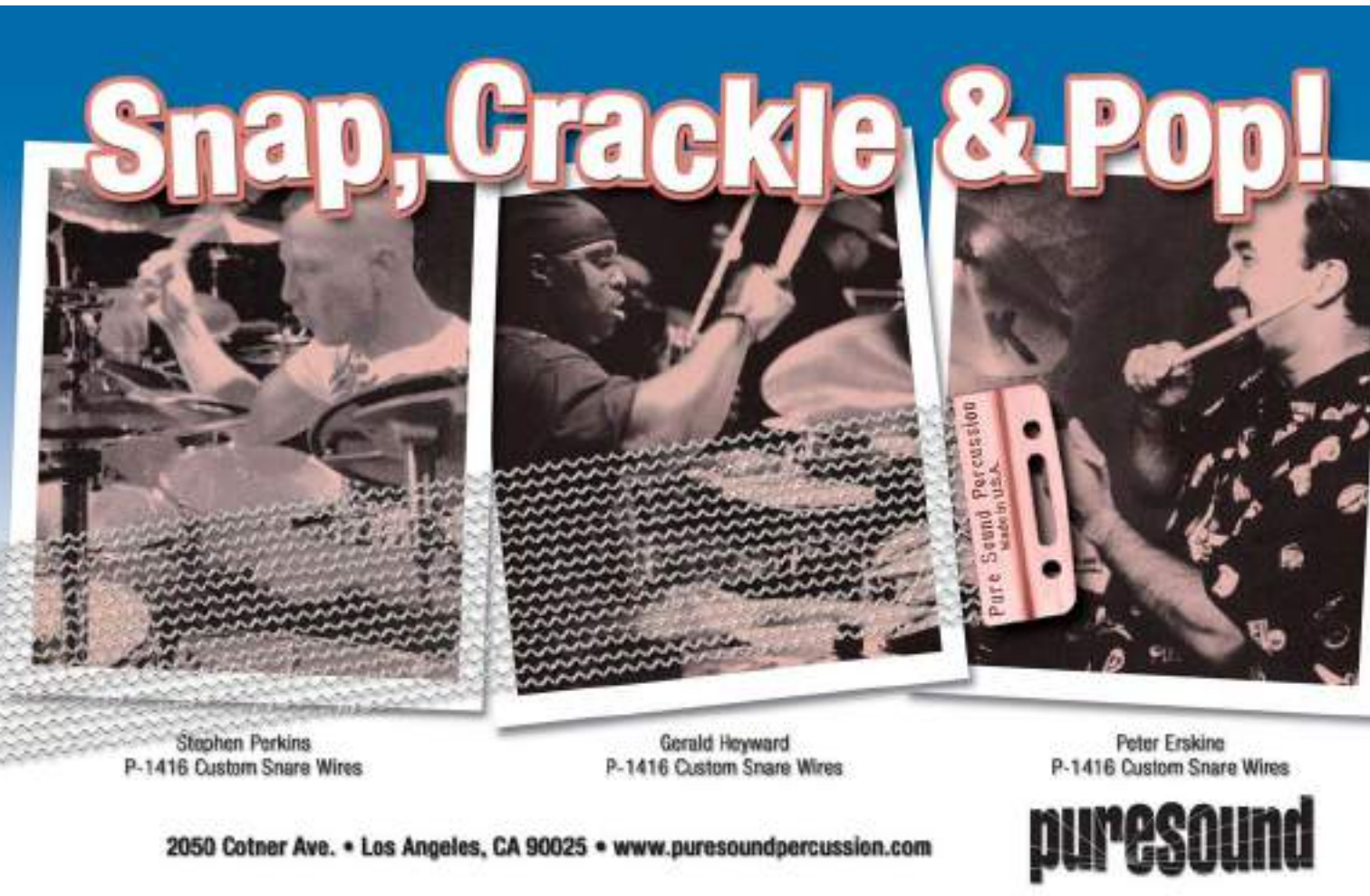
Marcus Baylor

and at the same time he really dealt with the composition and each section. It amazed me, because with an orchestra you would automatically think that he might just be playing a part, but he was really *playing*.

"The thing that amazes me about The Yellowjackets is you could have one tune with four, five, or even six different sections and feels," he says. "One section might be like a crescendo, one might be just burning over solo changes, and another might be like a breath of fresh air, a different color and texture. The trick is to try to bridge those sections together."

On his recording debut with The Yellowjackets, the double-live CD *Mint Jam*, Baylor shows great musicality and drive. He emulates The Roots' Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson with his bold cross-stick work on "Evening News," and he displays a creative, non-traditional sense of dynamics while supporting and soloing on "Runferyerlife." "We might begin soft and then start moving," Marcus offers. "We might not even climax where



most people expect us to. A musical climax doesn't have to be loud. It can move like a straight line, or up or down."

Baylor stings it on all The Yellowjackets' grooves, whether it's the rapid-fire "Statue Of Liberty" or the ultra-tasty stew of 4/4 and 6/8 called "New Jig." "I think of 'New Jig' like two different meters going simultaneously," he says. "Some of the feels sound like four, and others six. Russell showed me some music by bassist Richard Bona that was in that kind of 6/8 feel, a six that I had never heard before. That six fits right inside the four. Apparently a drummer from South Africa had shown Will Kennedy the groove to 'Capetown,' and I'm still working on the way they feel that six. I practice it all the time.

"I learned from Kenny Garrett that there are notes inside of notes," Marcus continues. "A lot of times I try to listen to Russ's or Bob's solos to try to fit inside their lines. If I'm playing a funk groove, you can hear the groove and the forward motion even when I play in between the lines of the groove. I take that same approach to straight-ahead and everything else. And it isn't going to be bass drum and ride cymbal all the time. I might start letting the toms be the lead, but you're still hearing the forward motion. When you begin to deal with the other sounds of the drums, that's where those textures come from that might force the other guys to try something new."

Baylor is looking forward to continued worldwide touring with The Yellowjackets, and to the release of his first studio CD with the group, due out soon. "The lifestyle of musicians usually gets a negative rap," Marcus says. "I want to be a light, to show that you can be a good musician, be level-headed, have a regular life, and still love God. Some people say if you're a Christian you can't play jazz, can't play this, can't do this, can't do that. But I'm a musician who prays *and* plays. I just want people to see that this is possible from the way I live, rather than just talking about it."

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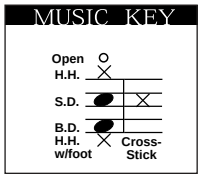
Hi-Hats Are The Best!

Part 1: Options & Exercises

by Billy Ward



I see the modern drumset as an orchestra. Toms are like a stabbing horn section. Cymbals are violins—and sometimes they are *violence*. But this particular article is more about independence and how we incorporate the four things that we do at once. Assuming each of us has four limbs playing the drums, why not look at the drumset as a four-piece percussion ensemble?

When I "compose" a drum track for a song, I like to make sure that each instrument introduced into the song has a full life throughout the song. An example? Well, let's say the tune starts off at a medium-soft volume, and some simple time is happening—cross-stick on the snare, for instance. Now, when that cross-stick escalates into a full-on backbeat, the "cow is out of the barn," right? It's going to stay there for the rest of the song, unless the softer dynamic is re-installed, like maybe in the bridge or a re-intro to another verse.

I'll start playing a song like this, trying all kinds of things—hands, mallets, all kinds of complex stuff—but then after a few takes, I'll narrow it down and get to the simplest part, the essence of what the drums should be doing. This brings us to one of the "big four elements" of the drumset, one member of that percussion ensemble I mentioned earlier—the hi-hat.

My use of the hi-hat is one of the most personal things I do as a drummer. I have a fixation—you might say an obsession—with the hi-hat. It is *so* underrated and underused in a musical way by so many drummers, and it is such an essential part of my playing.

In jazz, there are many examples of creative uses of the hi-hat. Tony Williams, Papa Jo Jones, Elvin Jones…hell, *all* those guys saw the hats as an essential musical accent device to the rhythmic fabric of their groove.

Let's go back to that pop track with the medium-soft first verse. Let's say the hat is playing 8th notes, and there's a cross-stick on 2 and 4. When the dynamics get bigger, the snare comes in and the hat keeps going. Then there's the chorus of the song (or certainly the bridge), and the drummer goes to the ride cymbal (maybe the bell). What's up with the hi-hat? It's been the chunky 8th-note rhythm foundation up 'til now, and when the drummer goes to the ride, it *disappears*.

Most drummers have the hat follow the snare on 2 and 4 (with their left foot) at this point, because it's convenient to have that side of the body in unison. There are guys who can do *amazing* things on drums with their feet and hands who don't have good independence with their hi-hat. Admittedly, sometimes after all that crunchy 8th-note action, a more open feel is desired, and the hi-hat needs to take a rest. But many times there's a need to keep that 8th-note energy happening.

If a guitar player is playing 8th notes in that section, then he's taken over the hi-hat part. But if the space is there and the need is there, why doesn't the hi-hat keep ticking? It just takes a little practice. Are you able to *choose* what happens with one-fourth of your drum ensemble? And are you basing that choice on sound or convenience?

Here are a few exercises that might open up some hi-hat independence for you. I could give you enough hi-hat exercises to fill an entire book, but I'd rather have you take these few examples and build on them yourself. Make up your own personal hi-hat challenges, and base your made-up exercises on a musical purpose. Keep your ears *open* in the practice room.

Here's a simple beat, much like the one mentioned above, only with a 16th-note pattern on the hi-hat.

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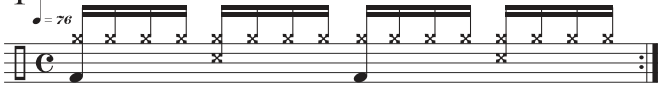
Now, to give that hi-hat its own life, mix in some foot chicks, instead of using only sticks on the hat. This adds a whole world of dynamics to the groove. (Be sure that the stick hits are on a *closed* hi-hat. You want to develop the control to be able to play a "chick" sound on the hats with your foot and then immediately play a closed hat with your stick, or vice versa. This may be hard to do in the beginning.)

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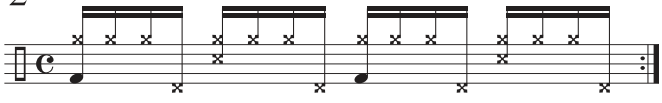
Also, as a variation, try this:

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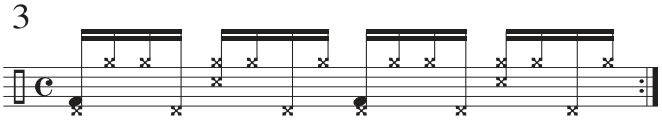
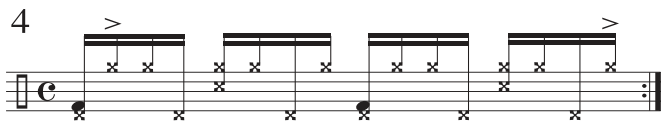
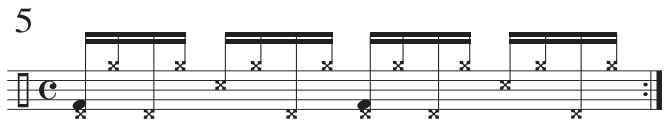
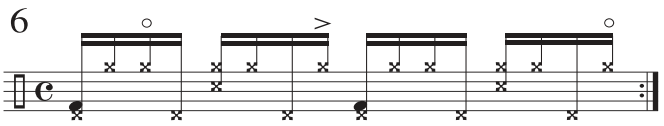
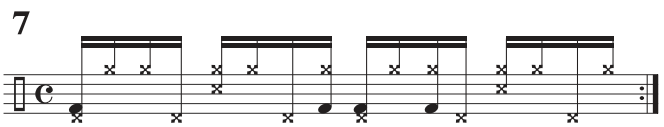

On the example above, I tend to come down with the right hand on the first 16th, as well as drop the foot. This succeeds in adding yet another subtle color to the sound. Also, I'll likely accent a bit

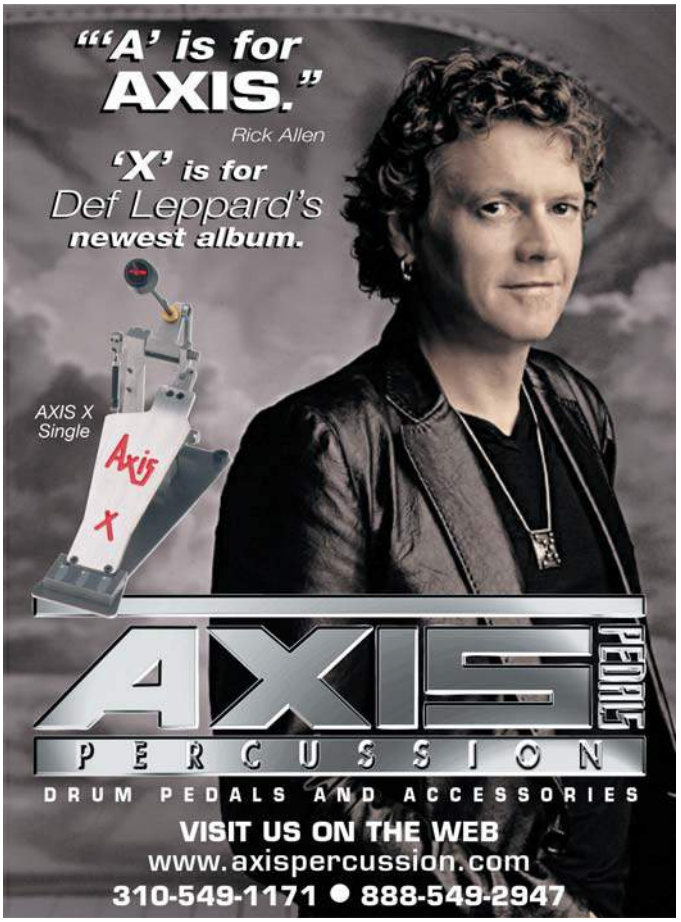
with the right hand, like this:

A subtle variation to this involves not playing the hat when the snare is playing. This adds a special lilt to the groove.

I love being able to open the hat just a bit before it closes with the foot, for a little bit of "pea soup" (as it sounds), or maybe it's just a little "pist" sound.

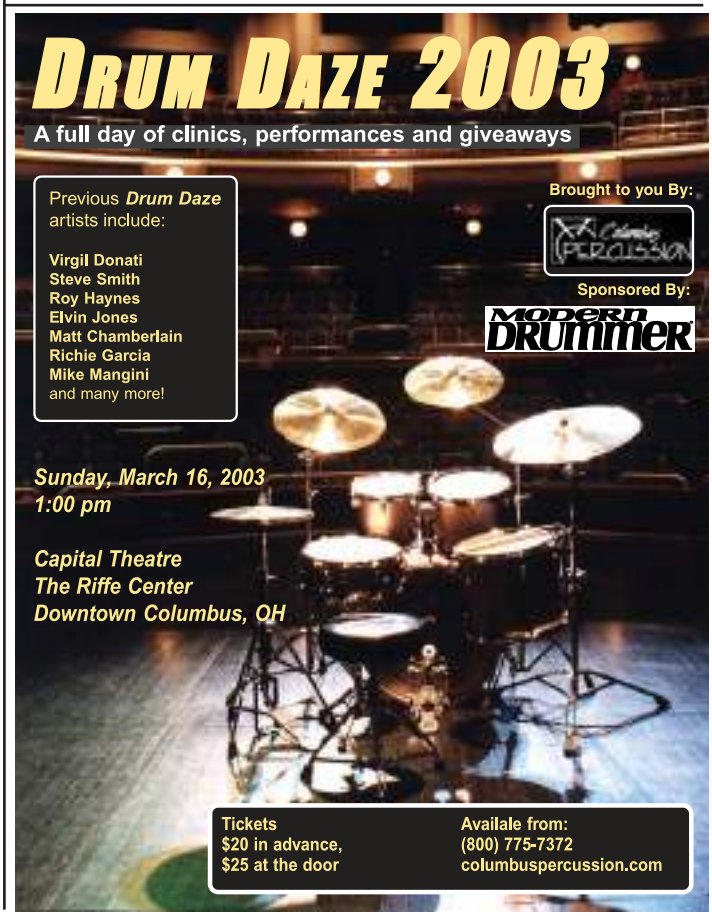


Notice that *none* of the hits before the foot hits are open. It's easier to play them open, but it's *great* to learn to control the choice of open or closed. Work on being able to choose just how much the hat is open in these situations. Get detailed and subtle control over this, and your grooves will get deeper and deeper.

On top of all this, try some of these with different bass drum patterns. Try some patterns with more than just 1 and 3 on the bass drum. Here's a very simple idea for a change in the bass drum.

Once you "own" these suggested patterns, you'll probably start coming up with your own possibilities. It might seem hard to master these concepts at first. But eventually you'll receive a greater balance on the kit. Both of your feet will be involved in the grooves you play (and that adds up to more mechanisms). Also, your entire *body* will be involved in the groove. That will make it easier for you to lock in your tempos. Good luck!

Billy Ward is a successful session and touring drummer who has worked with Carly Simon, Robbie Robertson, Richard Marx, Ace Frehley, John Patitucci, Bill Champlin, and Joan Osborne. Billy can be reached at his Web site, www.billyward.com.





Comping With Philly Joe

The King Of Groove And Momentum

by John Riley

MUSIC KEY

R.C.

S.D.

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In my last article ("Philly Joe 'Fours,'" December '02 *MD*), we looked at the great four-bar solos that Philly Joe Jones played on Miles Davis's *Workin'*. I hope you've listened to that CD and are in the process of digesting and experimenting with that vocabulary.

Philly Joe was undoubtedly a fantastic, creative, and slick soloist. But I imagine that his services were requested on so many record dates and with all those great bands primarily because his groove and comping were always super-swinging. In this article we'll examine Joe's playing on the melody of "Blues For Philly Joe," from Sonny Rollins' 1957 recording *Newk's Time*.

"Blues For Philly Joe" is a twelve-measure blues with a syncopated melody. Sonny plays the melody twice. Joe's playing displays that highly desirable but very elusive combination of great stability and intense forward momentum. On paper his playing isn't overly complex; he plays the regular cymbal pattern (except as noted in measures 18 and 24) and 2 and 4 on the hi-hat. Joe adds simple syncopations on the snare drum, and though he drops a few bombs with the bass drum, he feathers throughout. (The written bass drum notes are accented notes within the feathering.) The buoyant groove comes from the metronomic nature of his time and the hypnotic effect of his unchanging cymbal beat. Joe generates forward momentum by the exact placement and authoritative attitude of his snare drum and bass drum ideas.

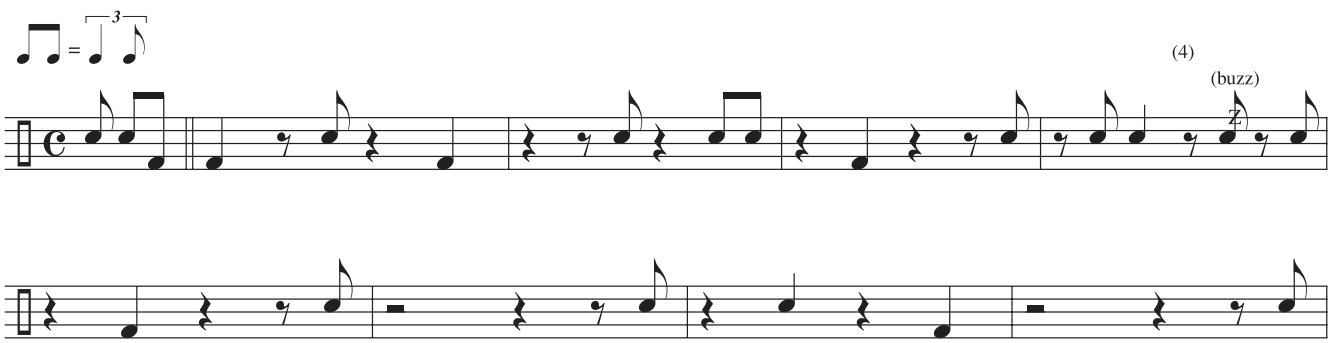
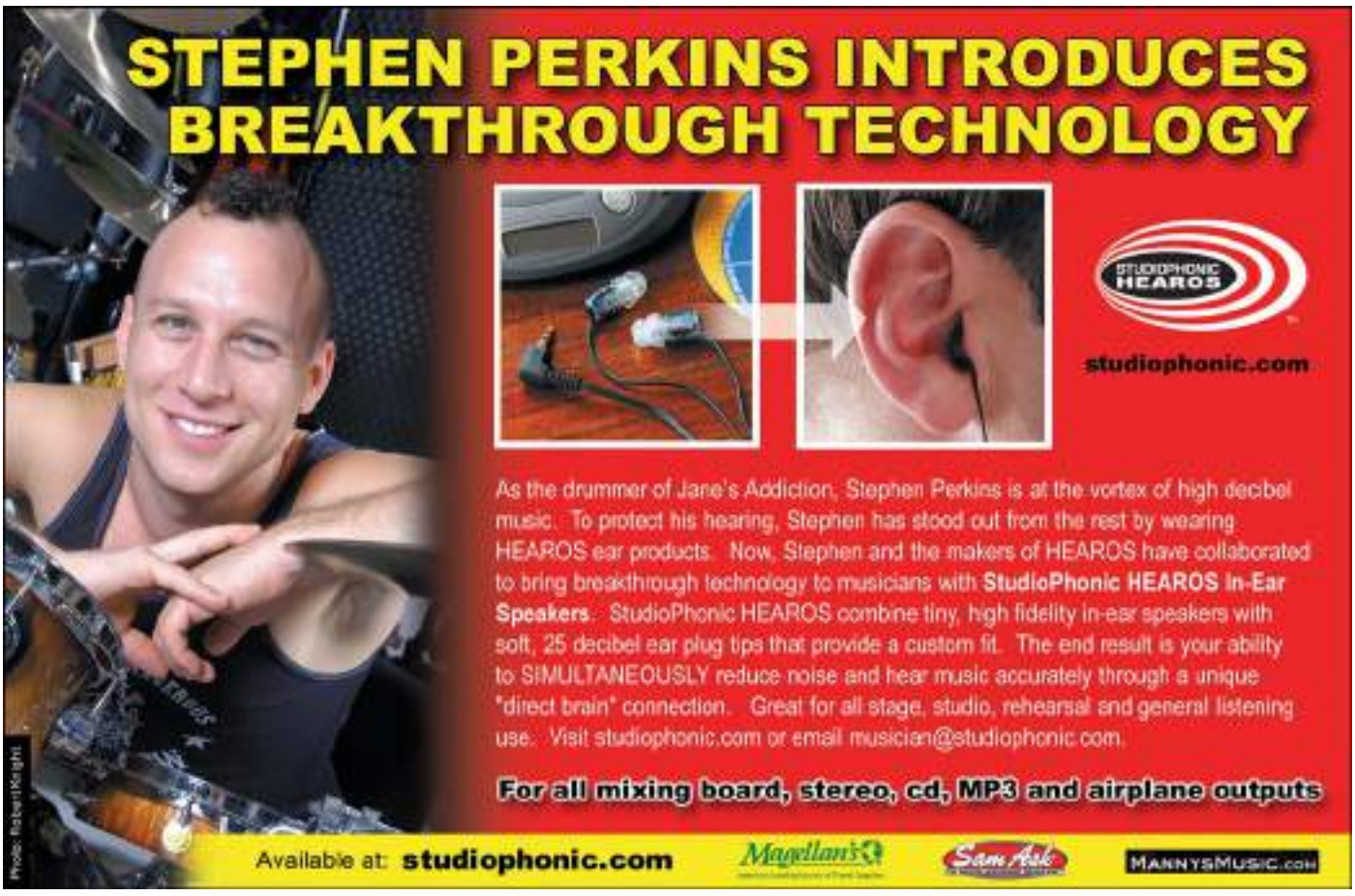
When you look at the transcription, please notice that Joe rarely comps on beats 1 or 3. Playing on those points in the measure really diminishes forward momentum, so avoid them. Many less experienced players feel the need to accent the bass drum on beat 1 of every bar or so; when Joe accents with the bass drum, he likes to play it on beats 2 or 4.

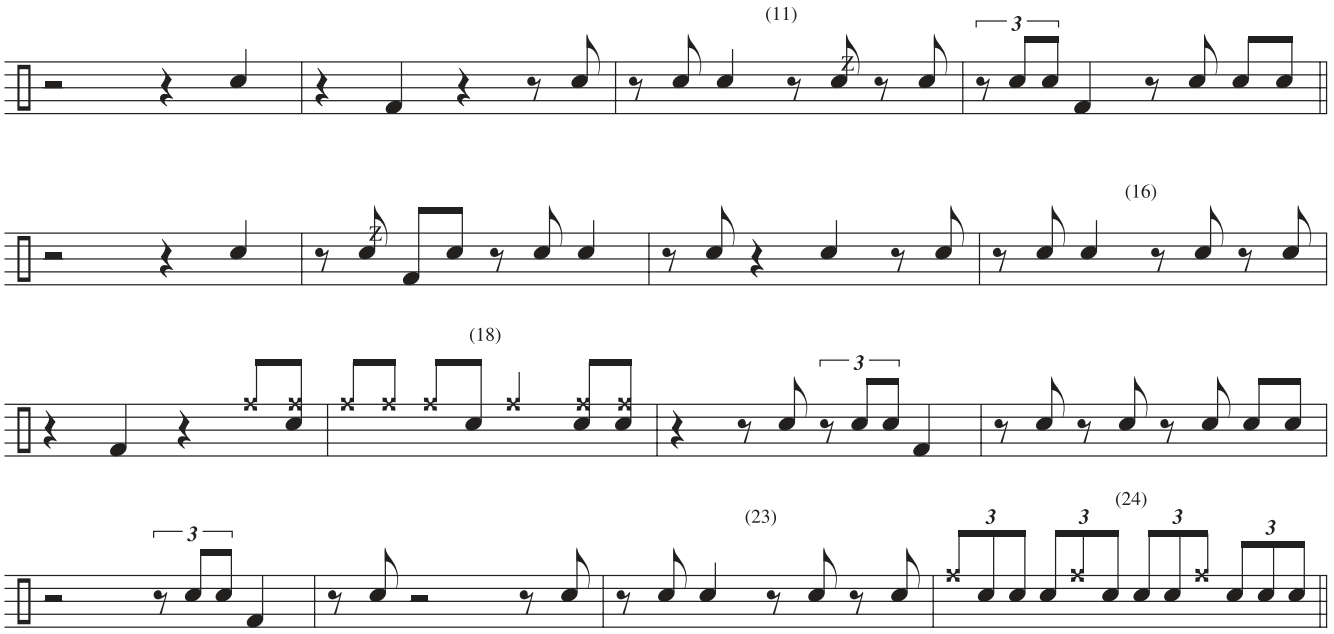
Studying Joe's snare drum phrasing is also illuminating. First note the simplicity, then look for repeated ideas. The most common phrase is the one that runs from the "&" of 4 in the third measure through the fourth measure. That phrase is also played in bars 11, 16, and 23, and it has momentum because it "leads" to a 1 but doesn't conclude on it. By not resolving on 1, Joe's phrases keep moving forward, and they keep listeners engaged by making them hope for a resolution.

Interestingly, I don't hear a specific correlation between the syncopations in Sonny's rendition of the melody and Joe's accompaniment. I believe the methodology behind the construction of Joe's comping phrases lies more towards "goosing" the time along rather than playing off the melody. Joe knows that if the time feels good, and if the comping propels the time, then everyone will be happy.

It turns out that Joe's comping works beautifully with almost any blues melody. Try playing the transcription below while singing a different blues melody—"Straight No Chaser," "Billie's Bounce," etc.

Now try playing the first twelve measures of the transcription plus the last four measures while singing any song built in eight-measure phrases. Same story. The comping works because it isn't specifically melody-oriented, it's groove- and momentum-oriented.

Good luck, and keep swinging.





John Riley's career includes work with such artists as John Scofield, Mike Stern, Woody Herman, and Stan Getz. He has also written two critically acclaimed books, The Art Of Bop Drumming *and* Beyond Bop Drumming, *published by Manhattan Music.*

Applying Dynamics To Stick Control

by Ron Spagnardi

One of the marvelous things about George Lawrence Stone's classic book *Stick Control* is that there are innumerable ways it can be used to help drummers develop speed, power, endurance, and control. The exercises below add on to the list of ways in which the book can be used. In this case, it's to develop a more precise execution and control of dynamics.

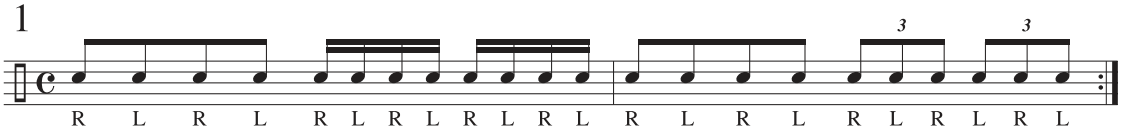
The exercises that follow use the following dynamic marks. The stick levels indicate the *approximate* distance the stick should lift off the drum to achieve the dynamic level.

pp = pianissimo, very soft. Stick level: 2" off the drum.
mf = mezzo forte, moderately loud. Stick level: 8" off the drum.
ff = fortissimo, very loud. Stick level: 12" off the drum.
Crescendo, gradually louder:

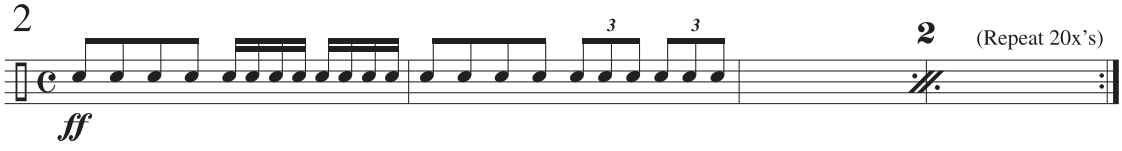
Decrescendo, gradually softer:

Take your time with these exercises, particularly those where the dynamic changes occur at close intervals. Start slowly, and gradually increase your speed as you develop control of the dynamic changes.

Though nearly all of the exercises in the Stone book can be used, we'll use exercise number 1 on page 14 for our example.

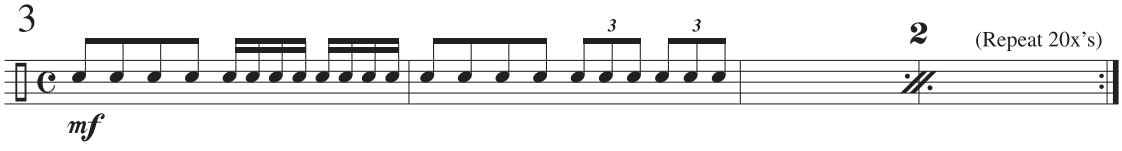
1

First, let's begin by playing the entire pattern twenty times at a comfortable tempo, at a dynamic level of **ff**.

2



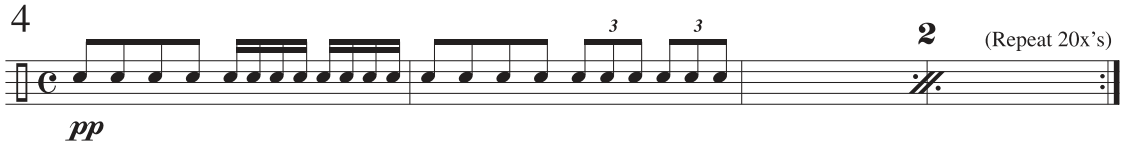
Next, repeat the pattern twenty times at **mf** (approximately 8" off the drum).

3



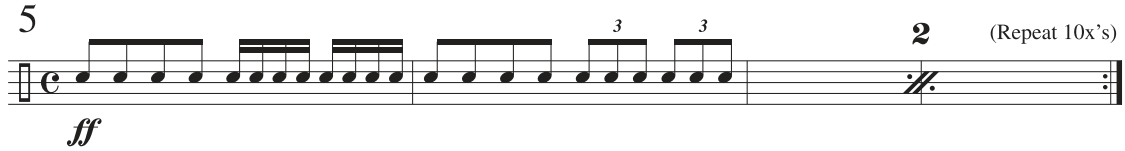
Now play the entire exercise at **pp** (very softly, 2" off the drum).

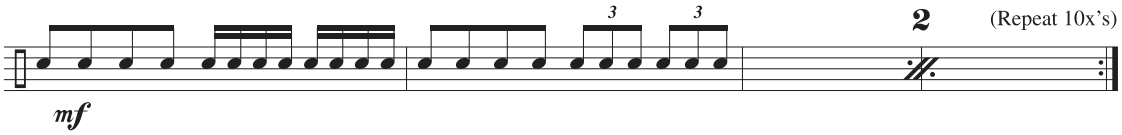
4



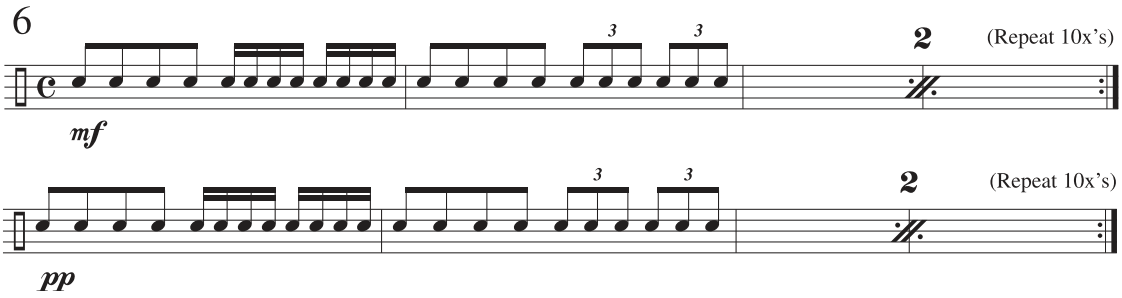
In the following example, play half the exercise (ten times) at **ff**, and half (ten times) at **mf** without stopping.

5

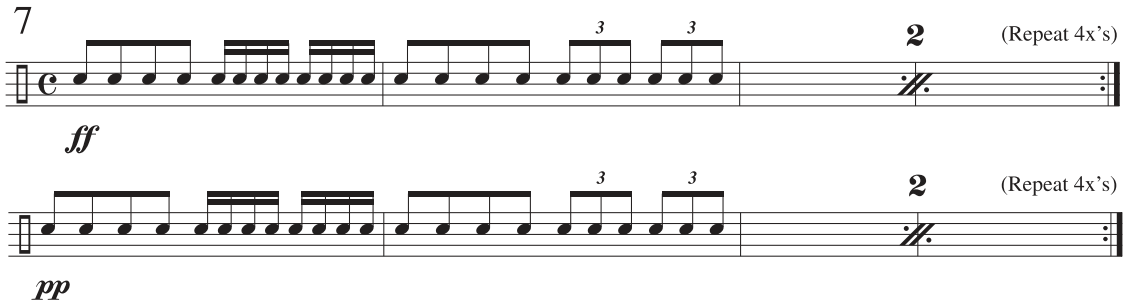




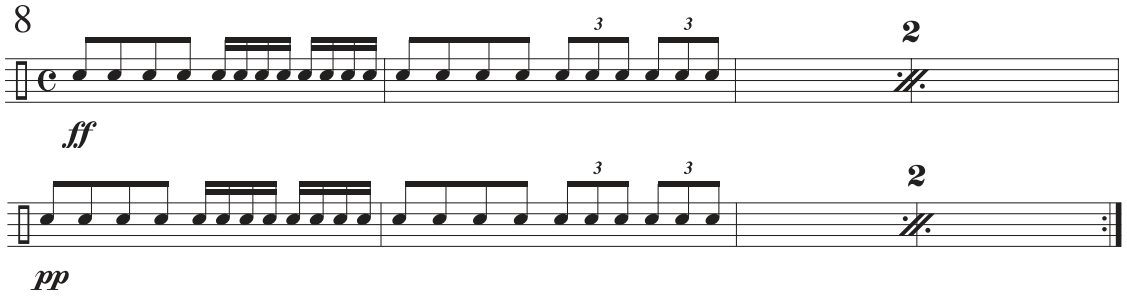
In example six, play ten bars at **mf** and ten bars at **pp** without stopping.



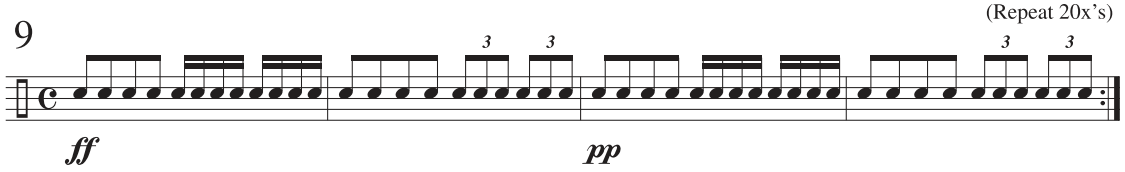
Extremely wide changes in dynamic levels occur closer together in the next few exercises. In the example below, play *four* repeats of the pattern at **ff**, followed by four at **pp**. Repeat the entire line at least three times without stopping.



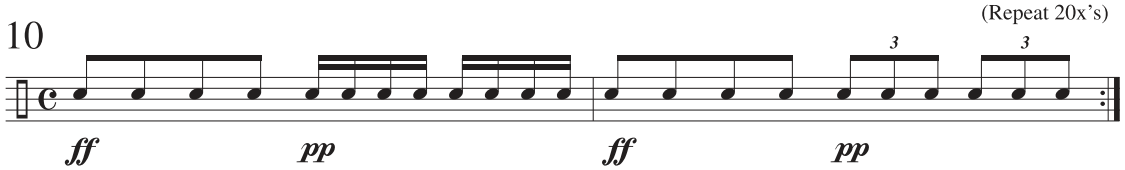
Next, repeat each two-bar pattern *twice*, first at **ff** and then at **pp**.

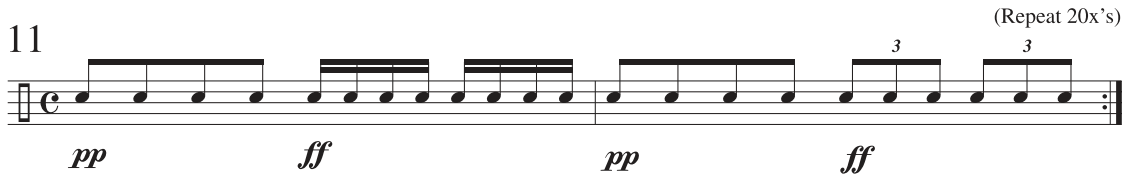


In the following example, the exercise is played *once*, alternating between **ff** and **pp**. Repeat twenty times.

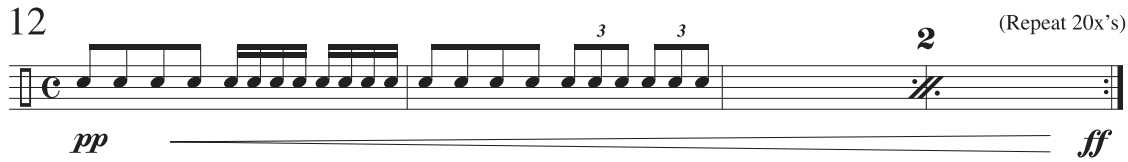


Precise control of stick levels becomes even more demanding in example 10 below. The same dynamics are reversed in example 11. Repeat both exercises twenty times.

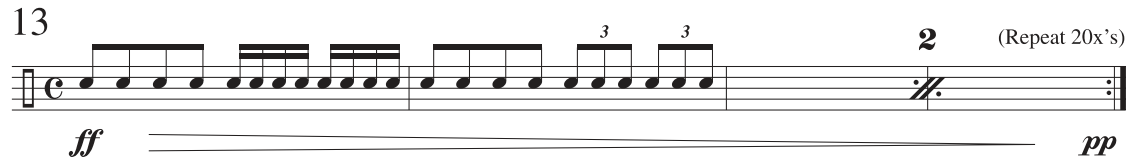




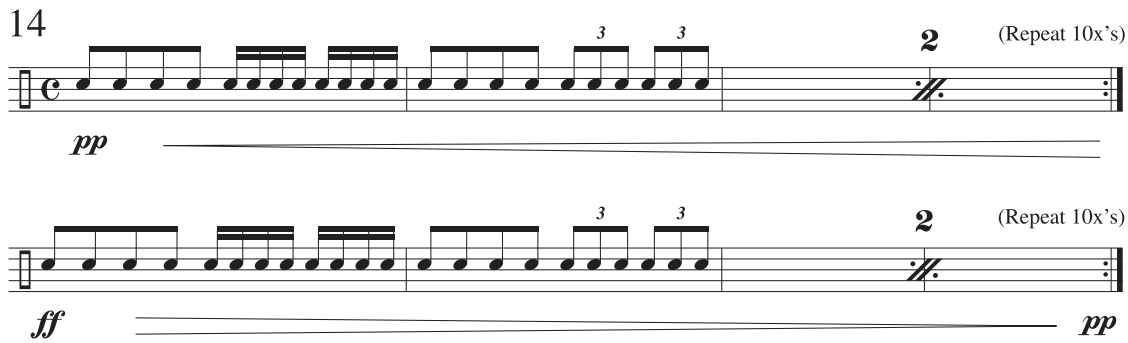
Example 12 is excellent for developing the long crescendo. Starting at **pp**, gradually build to **ff** over the full twenty-bar span.



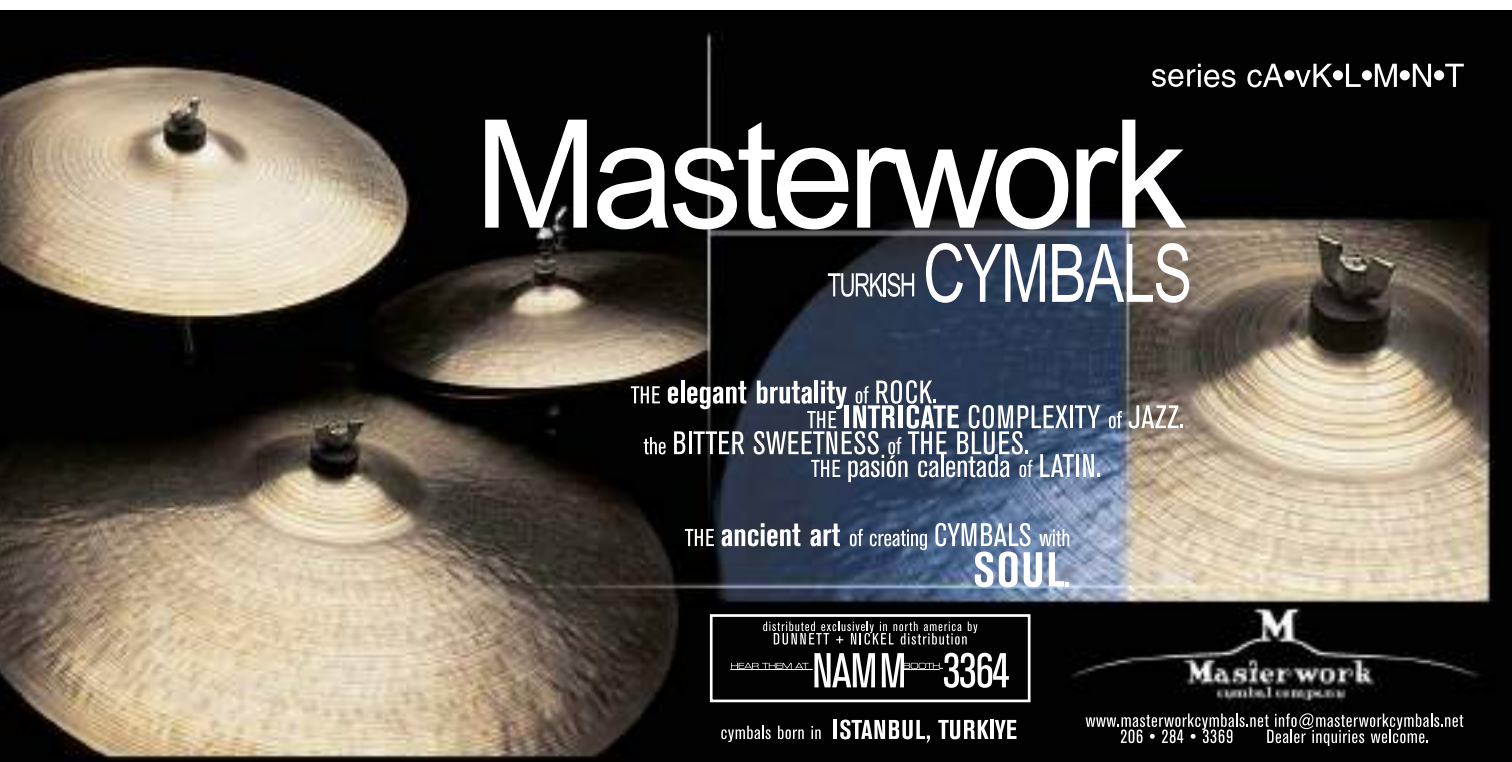
Now try the decrescendo, gradually progressing from **ff** to **pp** spread out over twenty bars.



The final exercise indicates a crescendo for the first ten bars (**pp** to **ff**), followed by a decrescendo (**ff** to **pp**) for the remaining ten.



These are excellent exercises to help you master dynamics and control abrupt changes in stick levels. If practiced regularly, they're one more way in which Stone's landmark work can help improve your overall technique. Good luck.



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— Terri Lyne Carrington

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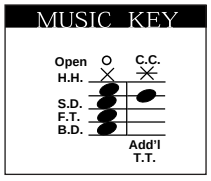
Dave Grohl

Queens Of The Stone Age's "No One Knows"

Transcribed by Joe Bergamini

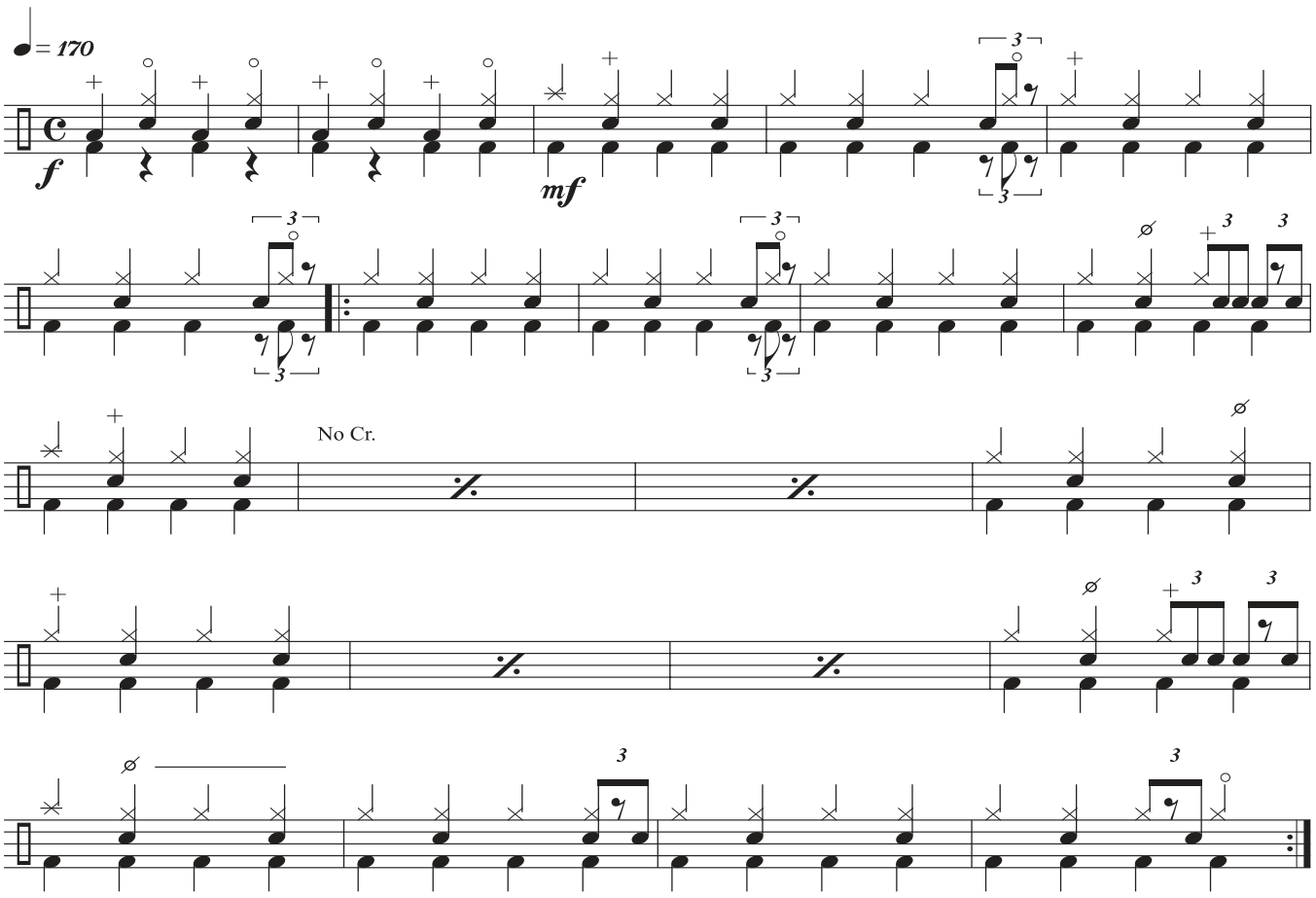
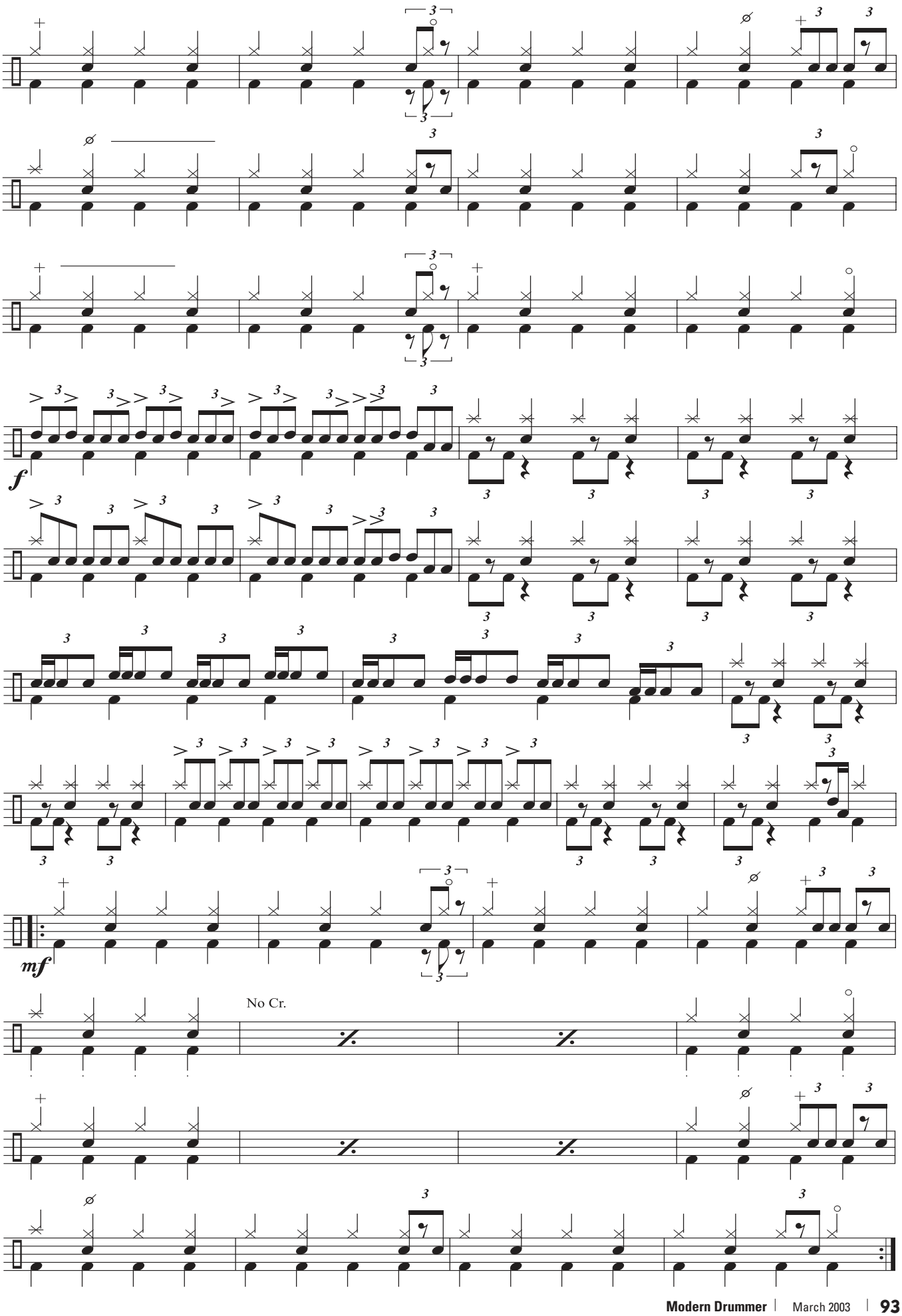


Dave Grohl was one of the most influential rock drummers of the '90s. His simple parts and primal feel with Nirvana defined the minimalism of the grunge movement. Then Dave moved up front, showing he could write great pop tunes with Foo Fighters and redefining himself for a new generation of fans.

Dave recently went back behind the skins to record and tour with Queens Of The Stone Age. On their disc *Songs For The Deaf*, he came up with some fun, quirky, and smart drum parts. The drum track on "No One Knows" is a perfect example.

Pay close attention to how Dave's performance fits with the tune and enhances every part of the arrangement. The main groove is a fairly simple two-step beat. Dave spices this up and makes it interesting by changing the tightness on the hi-hat in various places (take a careful listen to this before playing the tune) and by dropping in tasty triplet partials in different places.

The chorus and middle sections of the tune feature bombastic and busy drum parts, moving all over the kit with tom runs and cymbal accents. This creates a total musical contrast to the verses. These parts are played with a lot of energy, but notice how tight Dave's timing is. He never loses the solidity of the groove, even when he's wailing.

This song has many retro elements, conjuring up memories of The Beatles, Queen, and many great '80s bands. The drum part hints at these elements in a creative and fun way. If you listen to the drums in this context, you can hear Dave's songwriting skill coming through. His part not only fits the song, but takes it to a higher level.

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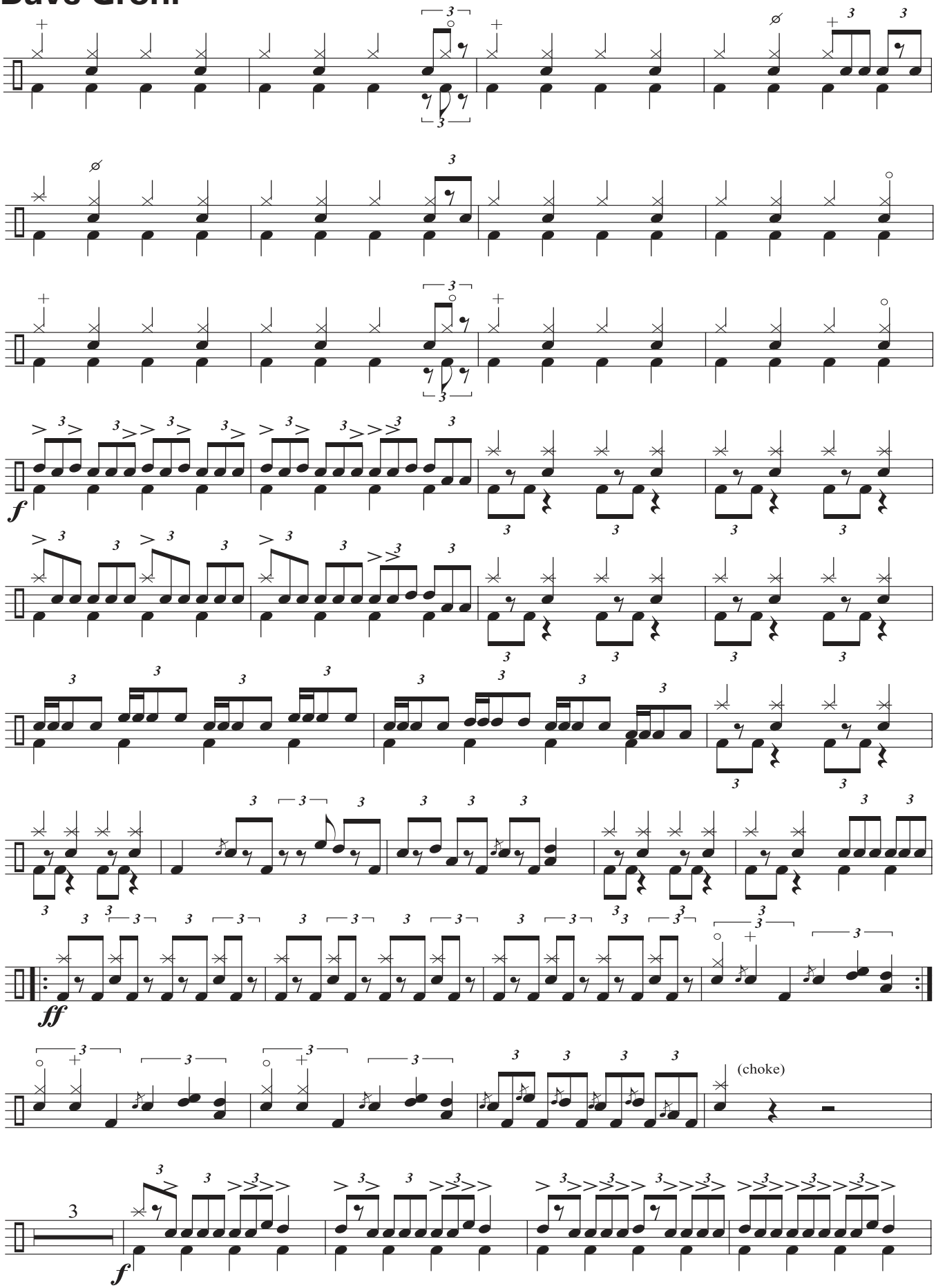
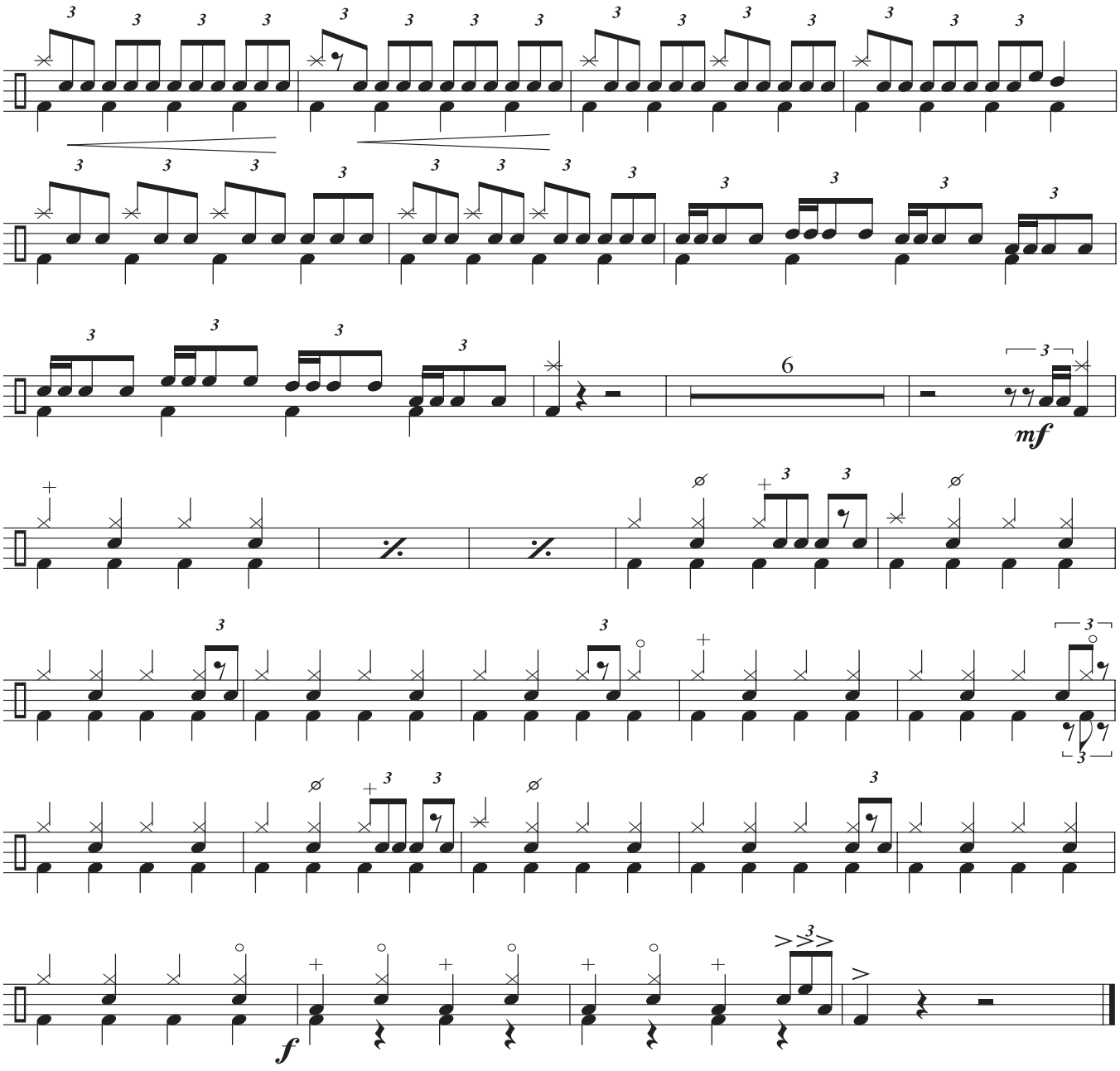
Dave Grohl

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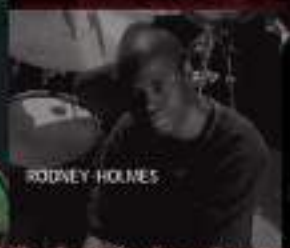
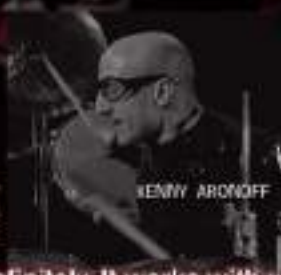
DAVE LOMBARDO fantomas



First of all the name and the look just captures everything—very scary. Seriously, I've never had any problems with them on tour. I beat the hell out of these things and nothing has ever failed on me. The most solid pedal I've ever played and really smooth at the same time.
JOHN TEMPESTA rob zombie

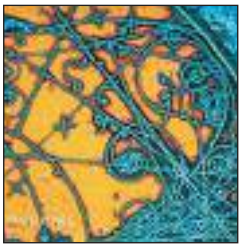


The Iron Cobra also has a lot of control—definitely. It works with you, not against you. The response is quick and the action is light. If you're trying to pull off some doubles, it doesn't move around on the floor—I play very precisely so that kind of stability is important.
BRIAN FRASIER-MOORE christina aguilera

Infinite adjustability, great playability, roadworthiness—I'm still on my original (black footboard) pedal. This is one part of my gig that I don't worry about.
JOEL ROSENBLATT spyro gyra

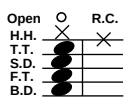
Pedals are the kinds of things that I would rather not have to think about. I just want them to be smooth and dependable ...to help me along the way to do what I want to do. The Iron Cobras are the best examples of that by far.
JOEY WARONKER rem

The Strokes' Fab Moretti
Is This It



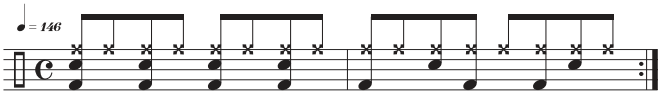
by Ed Breckenfeld

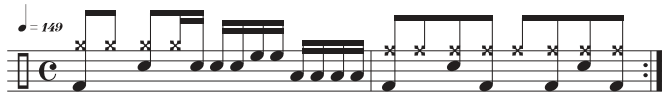
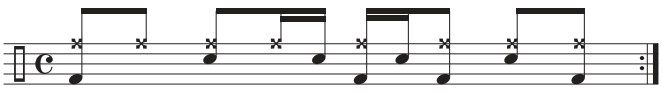
MUSIC KEY

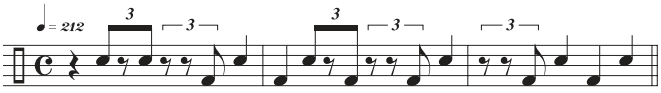
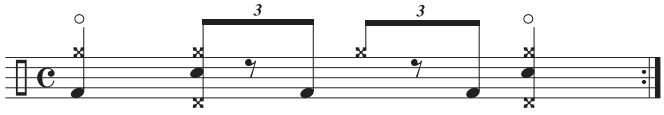


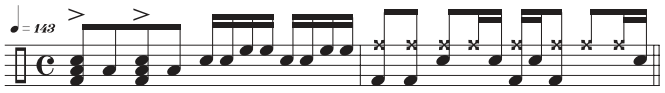
Success continues to build for New York's pre-eminent garage rockers, The Strokes, with the reissue of their debut album, *Is This It* (now coupled with a DVD of the group's videos). Drummer Fab Moretti's minimalist approach is a perfect match for the moody melodic sound of his band. Eschewing fills and complicated beats for a simple, driving approach, Fab creates repetitive, trance-like grooves that are a major part of The Strokes' appeal. Let's check out a few of those grooves.

"The Modern Age"

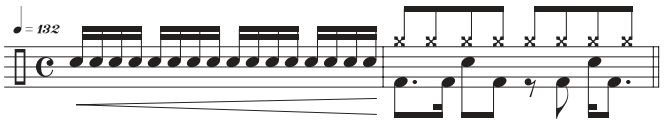
Fab cruises along on his snare and floor tom for the intro and verse of this song, then releases into the ride cymbal in the chorus.

"Soma"

One of the album's rare drum fills kicks this tune into its second chorus.

As the song moves to a close, Fab turns up the intensity with this beat.

"Someday"

This single opens with a classic double-time R&B drum figure. Fab builds the dynamics by adding hi-hat quarter notes to the pattern when the strumming rhythm guitar part comes in.

The chorus features open hi-hat hits on the downbeat to counterbalance the offbeats in the kick drum pattern. This creates a wonderful polyrhythmic effect.

"Alone, Together"

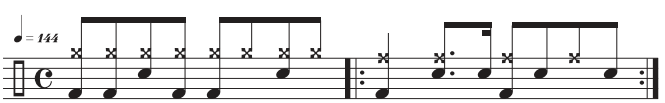
The guitar solo in this track begins over a pounding floor tom beat. When the solo becomes more syncopated, Fab follows by

switching to the ride cymbal and adding offbeats on the snare.

"When It Started"

Changing pace, Fab pulls out a funky little bass drum groove for

this tune.

"Trying Your Luck"

Here's a couple of beats that effectively help contrast this song's sparse verse and busy chorus. The atypical snare placement in the



chorus is what really makes the difference.

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Playing Unmiked

Part 2: I'm Unmiked...And I'm *Still* Too Loud

by T. Bruce Wittet

Last month we looked at those unhappy drummers who play unmiked and can't generate enough volume to compete with their amplified bandmates. We talked about ways to create a bigger, richer sound that will penetrate, simply by adjusting one's tuning and approach to the drumset.

This time we're addressing a different group of drummers. You know who you are: You play too loud (you animal!) and you're always taking heat for it. Even when you *think* you're paying quietly, you're still too loud. You don't need microphones; you need a mute button!

We're going to help you cut your volume a good 25%, just by suggesting alternative methods of tuning, muffling, and striking. Whether you're a rocker or a lounge lizard, you'll breathe easier with our suggestions—as will anyone within earshot of your drums.

Don't be alarmed by all this. We're not going to have you play *that* much quieter. What we're going to do is help you develop a different concept of drumming execution, along with some special-case strategies. Hey, it's either that or the phone is going to stop ringing.

At the outset, I want you to know that I feel for you. You see, I've been there. After thirty-five years of playing, I *still* work hard at playing dynamically. Even so, I'm certain that I've lost work because of a tendency to play too loud. Even after years of playing at a lower "volume threshold," I occasionally forget myself and deliver rimshots that start noses bleeding. In general, though, I've gotten a grip on my problem. Now it's your turn.

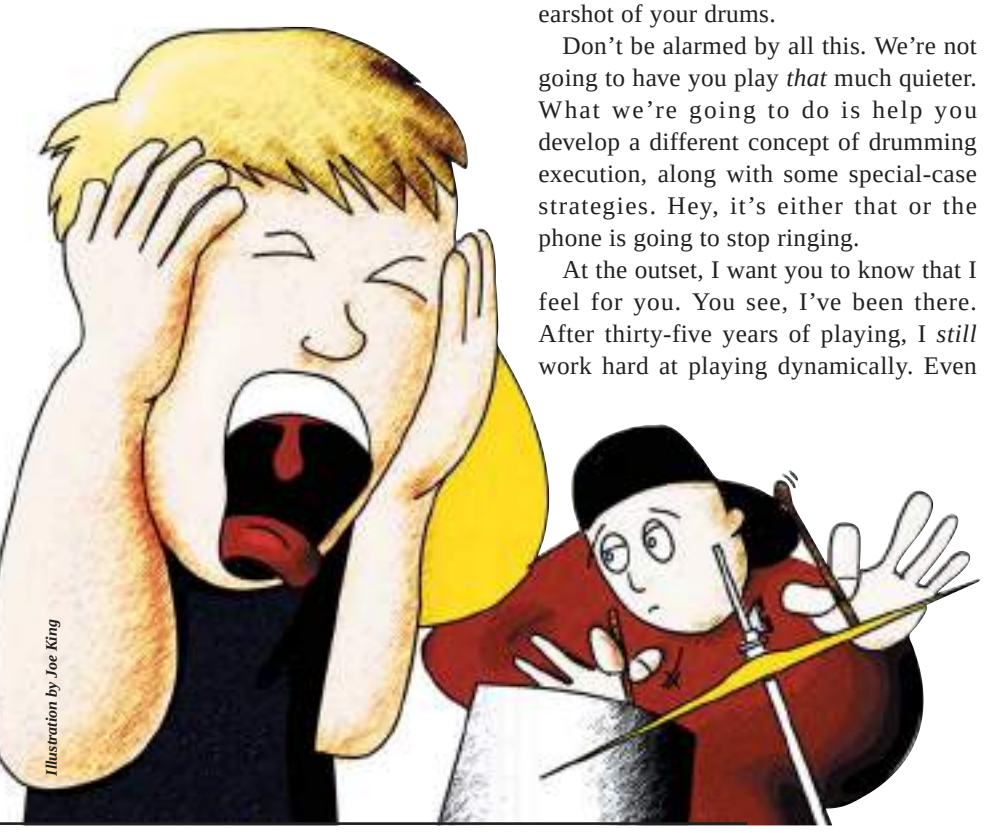


Illustration by Joe King

Real Life Stories

In 1983, I was on the road. The destination was the polite theater district of a major Canadian urban center. I remember our band's station wagon rolling up to the club. A marquee across the street answered a gnawing question in Canadian literature: *Glen has seen the wind*. This was going to be an enlightening gig.

Was it *ever*. From the downbeat at the soundcheck, they were all over me—management, staff, and, finally, the bandleader. "You're way too loud. Can you play quieter?"

Guilty as charged. But *you* try playing U2's "Pride" at *pp*. It's just not going to be convincing, is it? And yet something had to be done, especially in light of the ultimatum issued to the band midway through the first night of this two-nighter: Either substantially lower the volume (read, "the drum volume"), or management would abort the gig.

Let me tell you how I made it through.

Reassessing Gear

At the time, I was using a Ludwig kit with power-sized rack toms and a 14" floor tom. I carried lots of cymbals, including an emphatically non-wimpy 20" Paiste 2002 Heavy ride and an 18" Zildjian Pang. (*Ouch*.) The snare drum was a round-badge Gretsch brass model with a 42-strand snare—another loud mutha.

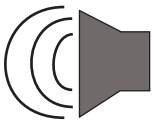
The next morning, I got up with *Sesame Street* and waited for the drum shops to open. I braced myself for the inevitable words of wisdom from older and wiser drum shop staffers: *Play quieter, idiot.* I'll never forget the look I got from one manager when I rejected his suggestion: a Deadringer (adhesive-backed foam ring) on the snare. His eyes raised as if beholding a roach in a tossed salad. "Well, if you don't want a whole ring," he counseled, "you can cut one in half." I refused, because I wanted *clang* from my snare. He kindly stuck with me until we had exhausted external muffling options. Finally, we happened upon an early version of the current Evans Hydraulic snare batter head, sort of "etched/coated" for brushwork. I happily bought it and tuned it a step lower than usual. It gave me a hint of my former rimshot and, better still, my volume seemed reduced significantly. Acting on another suggestion, I traded my Pro-Mark hickory 747 Rock sticks for a Canadian maple stick—another quick fix for a lighter sound.

Another thing I did was replace the top die-cast hoop on the snare drum with a standard, triple-flanged hoop (purchased second-hand for five dollars). Man, did that tame the rimshot! To complete the picture, I placed strips of duct tape on the bottoms of my cymbals.

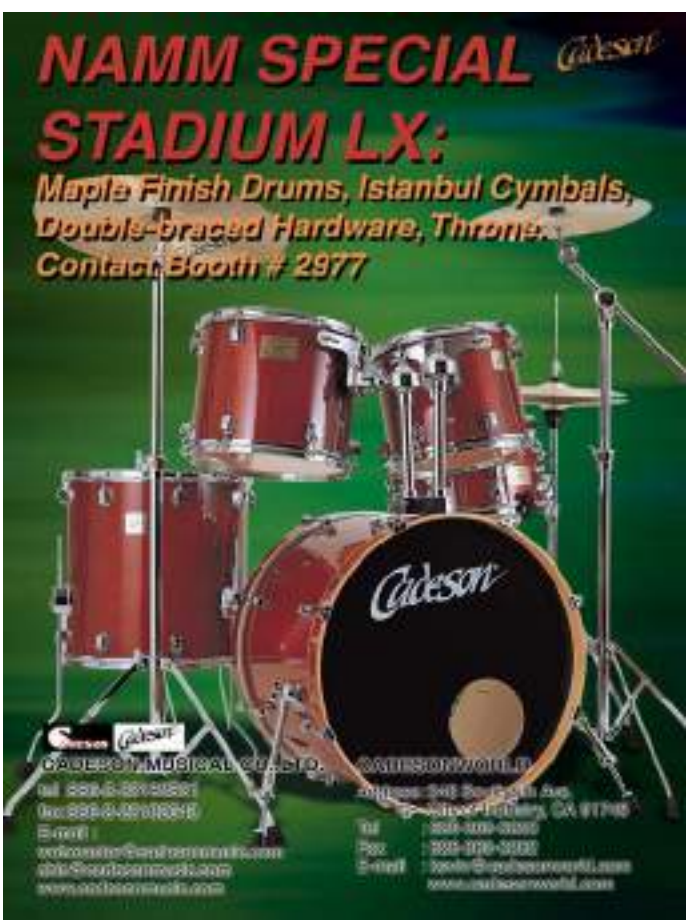
Those measures saved the gig. The volume became manageable. And although I probably should have lightened up, I never had to play *that* much quieter.

I can hear what you're saying: There's something inappropriate about playing

TIPS FOR REDUCING YOUR VOLUME



- **Hit a softer rimshot—or no rimshot.**
- **Try a softer felt bass drum beater.**
- **Tune lower to blend, as opposed to projecting.**
- **Don't lay into cymbals or open hats.**
- **Avoid center-stage placement behind the vocalist's mic'.**
- **Use pre-muffled heads front and back on your bass drum (Remo PowerStroke 3, Evans EQs or Hydraulics, Aquarian Super Kicks, Attack Dead Heads, etc.).**
- **Use smaller, lighter sticks, or switch from sticks to rods or brushes.**
- **Use muffling devices like tape, Zero Rings, or Moon Gel on drums and cymbals judiciously.**
- **Practice generating energy and intensity at quieter volumes.**



Creed or Zeppelin at a whisper. On the other hand, remember Nirvana on *Unplugged*? Dave Grohl was happy as a clam—and credible, too—playing quietly with multi-rods.

It's Not Always The Volume

Sometimes how *loud* you're playing isn't actually the offending element. It might be the *tone*. When you hit a rimshot with all you've got, you're introducing a certain amount of distortion. A slight variation in tuning—perhaps loosening a couple of lugs—might alter that piercing tone and still yield the effect you're seeking.

It might be that the *balance* is the culprit. In other words, you might be able to retain the force with which you strike things in general, but ease up on selected items. For example, I used to be obsessed about getting a certain cymbal sound. Turns out I was overplaying my ride, something I discovered when recording with two overheads and a kick mic'. When I played the cymbals too loud, I couldn't hear my toms in the mix. And remember, too much snare blows *everything* away.

In this game, you should be second-guessing the "mix" you're sending to the hall. You can measure your progress by placing a recording Walkman out front. If the tape is picking up too much snare, chances are it's not the crappy internal mic'. It's that you're playing the snare too loudly.

Remember Nirvana on *Unplugged*? Dave Grohl was happy as a clam—and credible, too—playing quietly with multi-rods.

Relax your sense of purist drum sounds. Sure, we *all* enjoy a cracking snare drum. But if the thing's going off like a shotgun, loosen each tension rod half a turn or so. You'll still retain some tone, and the drum will sound less harsh. A little external muffling—tape, Moon Gel, a Zero Ring—will further damp down an offending drum.

Translator Please

I've found that people who complain about volume tell you one thing but mean another. I subbed on a country gig a couple of summers ago. They'd say, "Your drums are a little loud." What they *meant* was that my hi-hat wasn't loud enough. Country players love the hats. If there's an eight-bar *tacet* section (that is, where you don't play a danged thing), they'll ask you to tap quarter notes on closed hats to keep everybody in time. In a rock mix they'll have the bass drum loud in the monitor, but in country it'll be the hi-hat—sure as the sunrise.

Avoid The Spotlight

If you're working with a vocalist and you know it's destined to be a quiet gig, *do not* set up directly behind the singer at cen-

ter stage. Why? Next time some drummer is playing, *you* stand in front of the ride cymbal. Then hold a *microphone* in front of the ride cymbal. Get the picture? You're trying to play quieter, not amplify yourself. Sneak your way to one side of the stage.

Gear

Small changes in gear can produce big effects. Let's start with sticks. Don't be a slave to a particular drumstick model. If you find you can't play the same patterns with a 5B and a 7A, you may have a technical problem. That 7A will save your butt when you have to play quieter. And a *maple* 7A will have you positively *feathering* the drums.

You may find solace in various multi-rods, split sticks, and so on. As far as I'm concerned, none of them sounds convincing on a ride cymbal, and I'm reluctant to offer them as options for louder *or* softer playing. I've been asked to tone it down when playing with Vater Acoustix and rods. But such tools may still be helpful, since they deliver changes in timbre. (Remember that it's not always the *volume* that's offensive.)

It should be obvious that brushes, either wire or plastic, will help. The problem is that there aren't many contemporary examples of drummers really *digging in* with brushes, so we feel a little wimpy laying down a 2 and 4. I suggest you watch Steve Gadd on the video *In Session*. He gets into this rocking shuffle with bassist Will Lee, and he's not whisking the drums. He's dealing in *heavy* backbeats.

When we get to gear purchases, you know how expensive it gets. So if you need a few cymbals strictly for lower-volume gigs, try hitting the pawnshops. I purchased a used ProCussion (UFIP-made) flat ride for $15. I can lay into it without the threat of buildup. Sabian Sound Controls are also good choices for low-volume situations. Similarly, on a quiet gig, I might go to a Paiste Traditional ride. I find that I can play Zildjian A Customs at *all* volumes, making them a versatile purchase. Sabian HHXs also work at various dynamic levels, and their wash is dark and inoffensive. Wuhan brand cymbals from Universal Percussion are the biggest bargain out there. In lighter weights, they make excellent low-volume cymbals. Remember, with cymbals, as with drums, it's not always a question of sheer volume. It's the pitch and tone. Want to sound quieter? Choose cymbals that have lower pitches, non-piercing bells, and moderate sustain.

Here's a simple but important rule: *Do not use a cymbal larger than you require*. If you're trying to play more quietly, you might find that an 18" ride will do the job, whereas a 22" is a whole lot of cymbal to tame and may be counterproductive to your goals. A 15" crash might provide the desired effect and take up less air space than an 18".

At the end of the day, you can only play so loud or so quiet. Don't be looking to rationalize everything in terms of volume. Think of tone. Think of timbre. Learn to play quietly with intensity, groove, and good time. *Control* will come to you—providing you don't bash your way out of a career. I almost did.

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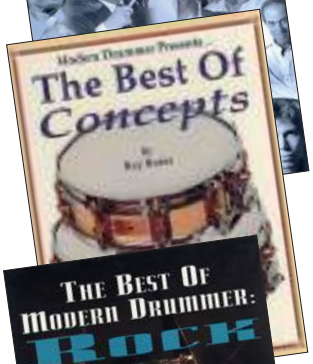

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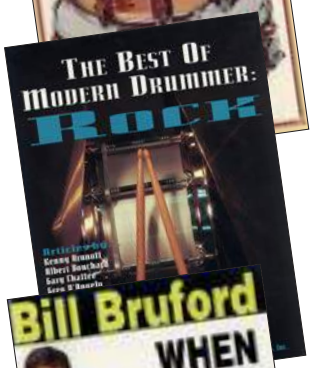

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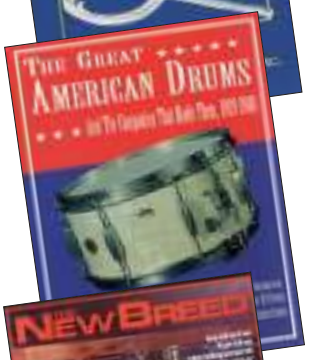
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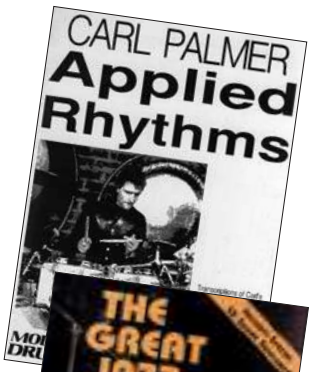

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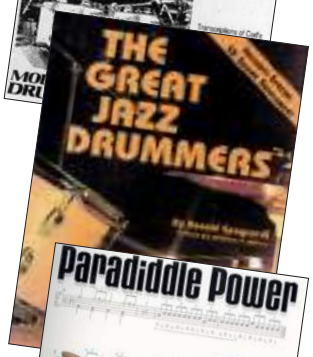

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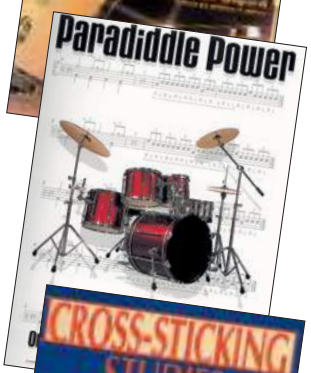

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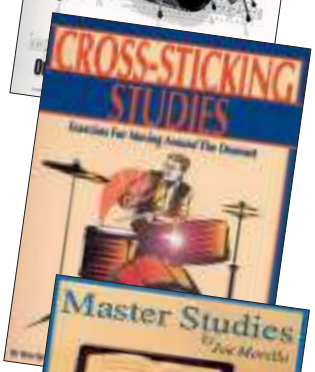

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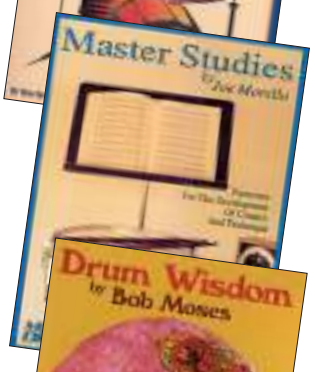

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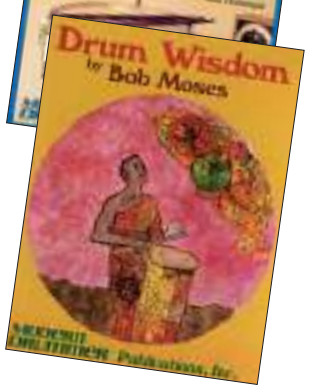

Drum Wisdom
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The unique concepts of one of the most exceptional drummers of our time.

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Drummers...

The Drummer's Studio Survival Guide
by Mark Parsons
The definitive book on recording drums, for the novice to professional drummer.

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21st Century Recording

by Larry Aberman

My phone rings at 10:00 A.M. That's a good sign; at 10:00 it's usually a work call. A voice says, "Larry, I need you for a Toyota jingle." I'm thinking, Yes! The voice continues, "Do you want to do it here or at your place?" All of a sudden this is a "your place or mine" proposition. I decide to do it at my studio.

I have one composer friend who views my studio as his drum room. It's as if we're operating in the same building, even though our studios are two thousand miles apart.

Mind you, the music is already written and the instrumental parts have already been played. They just need me to add drums to their spot. This is where the 21st century kicks in. My studio is equipped with a computer, digital audio software, a mixer, preamps, mic's, a good-sounding kit, and an Internet connection. It's a perfect fit for the job.

How It Works

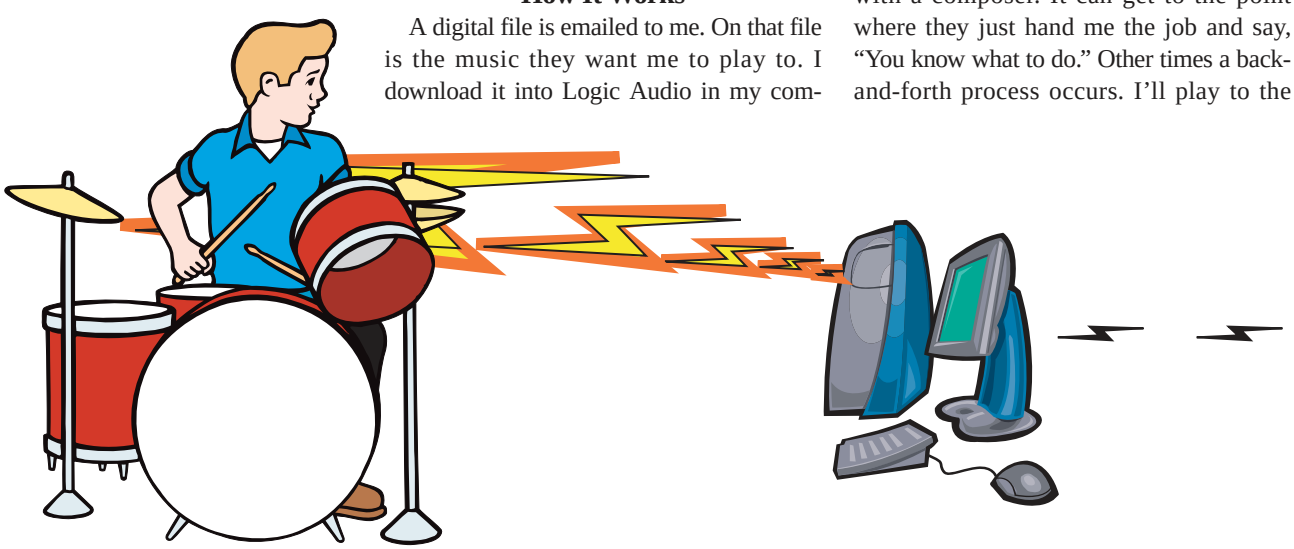
A digital file is emailed to me. On that file is the music they want me to play to. I download it into Logic Audio in my computer (my choice of digital audio software), adjust the tempo of the sequence (they gave me the bpm), and record my performance onto the hard drive of my computer. I then mix down the drums as I think they ought to sound, and email a stereo file back to the composer. Most of the time that's it. All I have left to do is email a filled-out W4. A check comes in the mail, and soon I hear myself on TV.

Believe it or not, this scenario happens to me pretty often. In fact, it's happening all over the world. The days of going to the studio across town to record are certainly not over. But at the same time, today such a trip may not be necessary.

As more and more composers work out of their own studios, they find themselves doubling as studio engineers as well. Often they don't have the time to record live drums. They're busy writing! For them time is money. Conversely, I've done stuff for writers who work out of some of the biggest and baddest studios in LA. They'd rather have me do the drums at my place because of the time and effort they save.

More In Depth

The scenario I described earlier usually takes place after I've developed a trust factor with a composer. It can get to the point where they just hand me the job and say, "You know what to do." Other times a back-and-forth process occurs. I'll play to the



track and send off the stereo file. The composer checks it, and sends it back with comments. Then I'll do another track. We might repeat this a few times. (Remember, email is pretty quick.) Sometimes, after the track is approved, the composer wants to mix the drums, so I'll send all the tracks separately. This would typically be the bass drum, snare drum, hi-hat, and two overhead tracks. Sometimes separate tom-tom tracks are requested. This is where a high-speed Internet connection comes in handy. If the files get too big to send via the Internet, a disk sent via Fed Ex is the next best thing.

Some Tech Stuff

Many times the Mac or PC compatibility issue comes up. Fortunately, in this case there *are* no issues. At this point all PC programs can import Mac aif files, and Mac programs can import PC wav files. If they can't, it's very easy to convert a file from wav to aif and vise versa.

But what if I'm working in Logic and the composer I'm working for is using ProTools? The files we're sending to each other are simply sound files. They function in any program. As long as my starting point is the same as the composer's, there's no problem. Digital information doesn't drift like an analog tape machine.

Other Scenarios

Sometimes a composer will come to my studio and perform his music live while I track the drums, then take the resulting tracks burned on a CD. He might even bring tracks with him that we can play along with. (Again, these tracks are in the form of digital sound files.)

Many times I end up as a co-writer on something because I'm in the right place at the right time (especially when the composer is there in my studio). Often, the flow of the music-making experience takes on its own energy and we start coming up with stuff together. All of a sudden another level of trust is built. The composer begins to view me as more than just a drummer. He may begin to throw me composition work.

Live Drums Are Alive

It's no secret that studio work for drummers has diminished. With the advent of sampling, *all* instrumental performances have been challenged by robots. But *nothing* can beat the feel of a live and interactive drum performance. So why not make it easy for a composer to get live drums on his work? I have one composer friend who views *my* studio as *his* drum room. It's as if we're operating in the same building, even though our studios are two thousand miles apart.

Diversify And Make A Living

In a recent *MD* article, Tommy Igoe stressed the value of diversity in one's career. I can practice my technique until my paradiddles sound like the wind. Or I can record drums in my studio till the cows come home. Neither one is going to guarantee a lock on a career in music. If anything, such one-dimensional action would probably be a detriment.

I see having recording capabilities as yet

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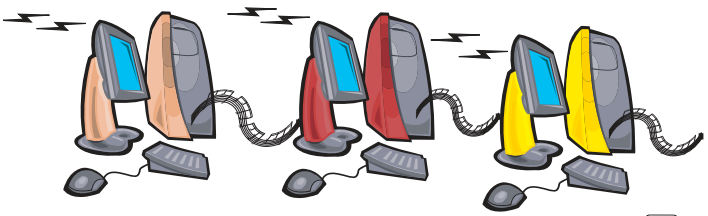
In The Studio

another arm of my career's reach. I remember when the Linn drum machine came out. Some drummers bought one, others ran away and cried foul. Because I bought one doesn't mean I forgot about music in its purest form. I still play with The Joe Sample Trio (a 9' grand piano, an acoustic bass, a 20" kick, and a nice set of K Zildjians). But as a drummer I feel qualified to *program* drums as well.

With all the technology available to convert your practice room into a recording facility, why *wouldn't* you consider branching out? (A small-biz loan can go a long way with this stuff). Drummers have a unique way of composing and hearing drums and music, be it on stage *or* in the studio. Recording tracks via Cyberspace is just another way of expressing our uniqueness.

Larry Aberman has recorded with Stevie Ray Vaughan, Nile Rodgers, Ben Harper, Ric Ocasek, and many others. He is featured on Joe Sample's Verve release The Pecan Tree, *and is a member of Joe's touring trio. He can be reached via www.larryaberman.com.*



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Mike Skiba
Cymbal Craftsman

by Bob Cianci

It's safe to say that nine out of ten drummers would never entertain the thought of re-hammering or re-lathing their own cymbals. We all know that high-quality cymbals, regardless of manufacturer, are costly items. Who would take a chance altering them?

Mike Skiba, that's who. He willingly cuts, bends, hammers, lathes, sets alight–and occasionally ruins–high-priced cymbals in his never-ending quest for perfection.

Mike is the son of a master metalworker, along with being a former semi-pro drummer. He began reworking cymbals nearly ten years ago in his basement shop in New Jersey, strictly as a hobby. His introduction to the art of cymbal making came at a young age.

Dale Ann Skiba

Before working on any cymbal, Mike Skiba carefully assesses its acoustic characteristics and physical condition.

"When I was a kid, I wanted to play drums," says Mike. "There wasn't much money for luxuries, so my dad, being a master metalworker, made my first cymbals from scratch on a lathe he built. They didn't sound too good, but they got me started. Over the years, I'd borrow cymbals from friends, because they were so expensive."

Mike (a warehouse manager by day) regularly purchases used cymbals from a local drum shop. After carefully ascertaining each cymbal's natural characteristics, he re-hammers and re-lathes them to his own specs. Through extensive research and experimentation, Mike has amassed an encyclopedic knowledge of cymbal structure and manufacturing techniques. With all this self-taught knowledge, one might think he would have landed a job with one of the major cymbal manufacturers. Think again.

"Let's just say I'm not a big fan of mass-production," Mike says, laughing. "The large cymbal makers have become too concerned with knocking out cymbals too fast, using computer-controlled manufacturing techniques. I admire guys like Roberto Spizzichino, the Italian cymbal maker who works on his own. He buys cymbal blanks from somewhere in China, lathes and hammers them himself, and sells them through a network of jazz drummers. My ultimate dream is to sit under the trees in Pistoia, Italy making handcrafted cymbals."

Mike learned his reworking techniques

the hard way. "I ruined a lot of cymbals during the learning process," he says. "The quickest way to trash a cymbal is to mess with the junction between the bell and the bow. I call that 'crossing the bridge.' If, during the lathing process, you take just a little too much metal off there, the cymbal will be lost.

Different patterns of hand hammering can be used to tailor a cymbal's attack and tonal quality.
Dale Ann Skiba

Cymbals that have been hammered are allowed to "rest" for a period of time in order to allow the molecules of metal to relax prior to lathing.
Dale Ann Skiba

"The other problem I had was cracking due to over-hammering the cymbals. If I wanted that pocked-marked 'old K Zildjian' look, I had to learn the limitations of the metal."

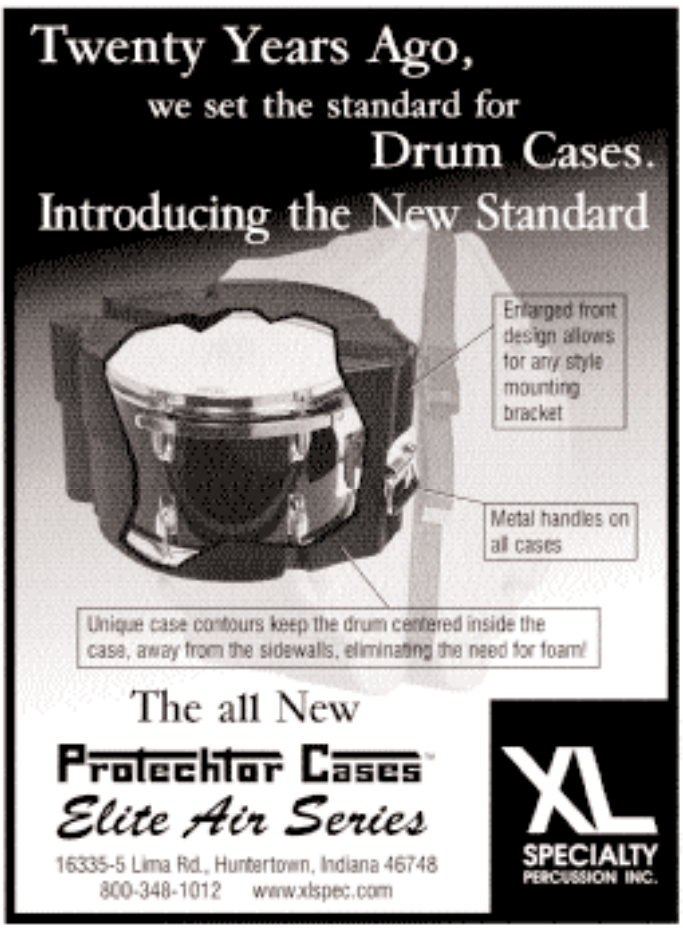
Before Mike reworks a cymbal, he listens intently for what is there—and, more importantly, for what is missing. He also listens carefully to what the customer wants in terms of sound. "I can only work with what is already there, taking away bad characteristics. It's virtually impossible to add characteristics that aren't already present. But every cymbal is different. If a customer wants a particular sound in a ride cymbal, I could hit a home run almost every time if I had a blank to work with. But if I'm asked to make a 'dream cymbal' from whatever the customer happens to have laying around, it's going to be more difficult."

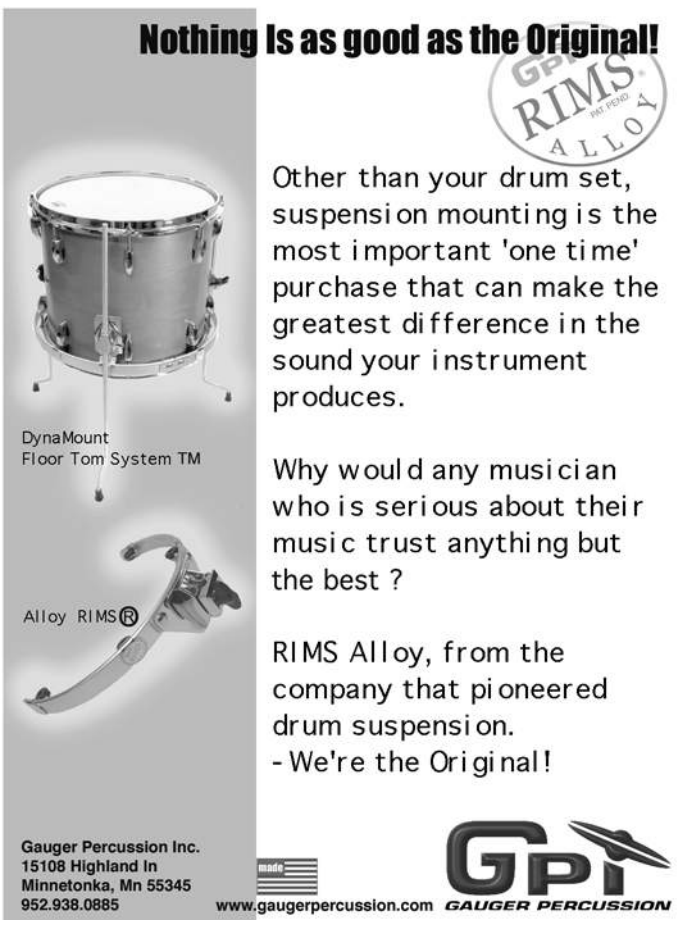
At this writing, Mike doesn't have a source for cymbal blanks. But he's working on it. "I got a very terse letter from one of the major manufacturers refusing to sell me blanks," he says. "But that's alright. I have other options."

The Reworking Process

When Mike takes on a cymbal-reworking project, he goes through a methodical series of steps.

Step one. Mike first plays the cymbal extensively to determine the individual tonal characteristics—good and bad—that are already present. This familiarization process gives him a complete picture of what the





cymbal needs in terms of reworking.

Step two. Mike begins the hammering process, using standard ball-peen hammers and a customized round, beveled anvil. If a less pingy attack with complex, dirty overtones is desired, Mike will hammer the cymbal in a random fashion. If a more consistent quality of tone is desired, the hammering will be uniform, but in a slightly irregular "stitching" pattern. Mike rotates the cymbal in a constant motion with his right hand, while hammering with his left. The process is sometimes completed in twenty minutes or less, depending upon the desired results.

The more metal removed in the lathing process, the deeper and darker the cymbal will become. But care must be taken not to remove too much, otherwise the cymbal will have no body.

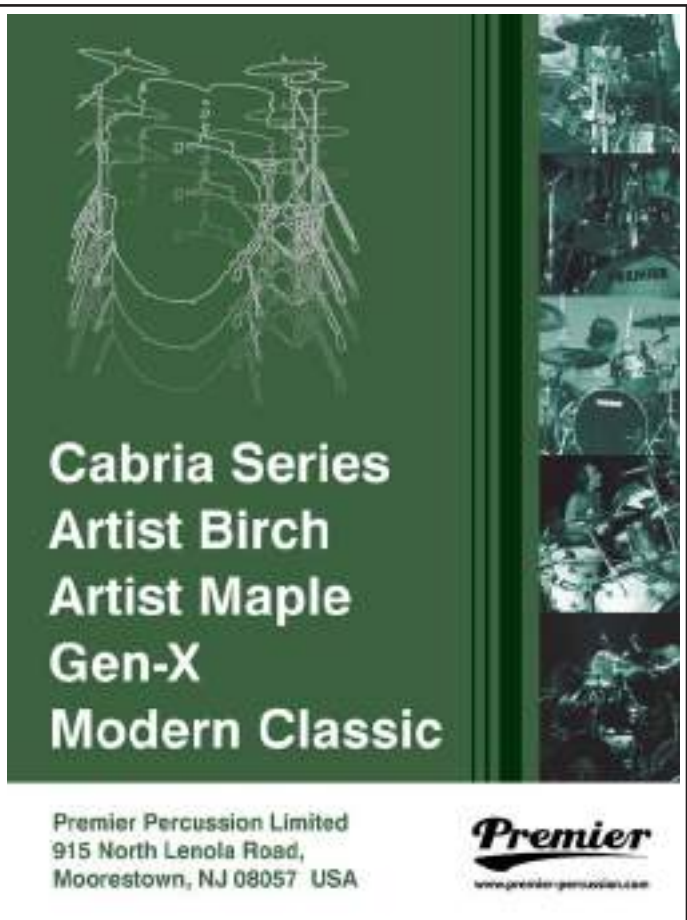
Dale Ann Skiba

Mike constantly examines the cymbal while hammering. His strokes must be true on the anvil in order to prevent "dead" blows that shock the metal without leaving an imprint. When he is certain his hammering efforts are sufficient to ensure the sound he's looking for, the cymbal is placed on a wall holder and allowed to "rest" for anywhere from two days to two weeks or more. Hammering upsets the cymbal's molecular structure, and this downtime is necessary to let the molecules relax. Mike may or may not hammer the underside of the cymbal, depending on the sound he wants.

Step three. Once the cymbal has "calmed down," it's time for lathing. Thicker cymbals will produce higher-pitched tones. Consequently, the more metal Mike removes, the deeper and darker the cymbal's inherent tone will become. Because Mike personally prefers the sound, feel, and look of old K Zildjian cymbals, with their inconsistent nature, he feels it's alright to incorporate "little anomalies" or errors, since they give a cymbal character. Mike uses standard and custom-made lathing tools, taking great care to equalize the lathing on top and bottom to achieve a balanced sound.

"Lathing is where you can either make or break a cymbal," exclaims Mike. "Once you remove the metal, there's no going back. So you have to be careful not to mess up by taking off too much. You never want to linger too long in one area when lathing."

I brought my own tonally unbalanced, Italian-made Zanki 20" ride to Mike. First he assessed its characteristics. The cymbal possessed great high-end ping, but very few deep undertones. Lathing the top would destroy the high-end stick response. But several passes on the underside with a lathing tool would bring out the missing depth. After each pass, Mike removed the cymbal from the lathe and had me play it. After five passes, the cymbal had the lower undertones that balanced the sound out



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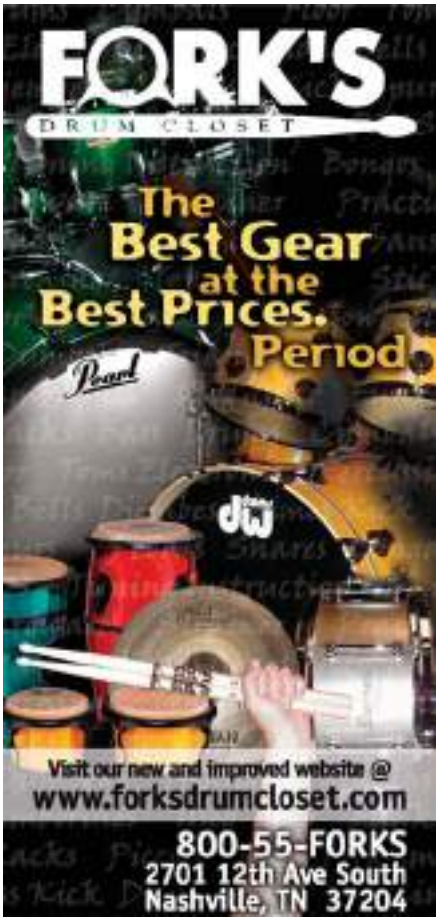

properly. At my request, Mike even built in a "sweet spot" about 2" below the bell. The cymbal produced a slightly throatier response when struck in that area. Mike calls this process "tuning the cymbal to the customer's ears."

After performing an operation like this, Mike may play the cymbal again for a few days, making minor adjustments to it in terms of light lathing. Finally, he signs his work, and the cymbal is ready to be played and enjoyed.

Cymbal Repair

Repairing cracked or broken cymbals is another challenge Mike has taken on. Fixing a vertical crack usually involves cutting a V-shaped section out of the cymbal. Fixing a horizontal or "smile" crack is a little trickier. Mike usually drills several holes along the length of the crack, but he's the first to admit that repairing cracked or broken cymbals is at best a temporary fix. In almost all cases, the sound of the cymbal is altered once the crack occurs—usually for the worse.

"Sometimes you'll get a buzzing, sizzling effect that can be interesting," says Mike. "But once a crack happens, the temper of the cymbal is destroyed. Personally, I prefer junking cracked and broken cymbals, or using them to experiment with. But I also understand the financial aspects of having to replace expensive cymbals."

Do-It-Yourself

Mike believes that the process of cymbal reworking is an art that almost any drummer can learn. All it takes is the right equipment, a little mechanical and artistic know-how, and patience. "Any drummer with the correct tools, a good ear, and the financial resources to buy cymbals for experimentation can do what I do," he says. "There's no mystical secret to creating great cymbals. I will say, though, that after all the years I've been doing this, I'm convinced that cymbals are living entities."

Anyone wishing to discuss cymbal reworking or repairing with Mike Skiba can contact him via email at BUBBALOOSTER@aol.com. And to see Mike's work firsthand, log onto www.cymbalholic.com and click on "A New Beginning."

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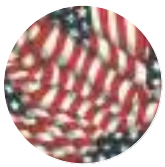

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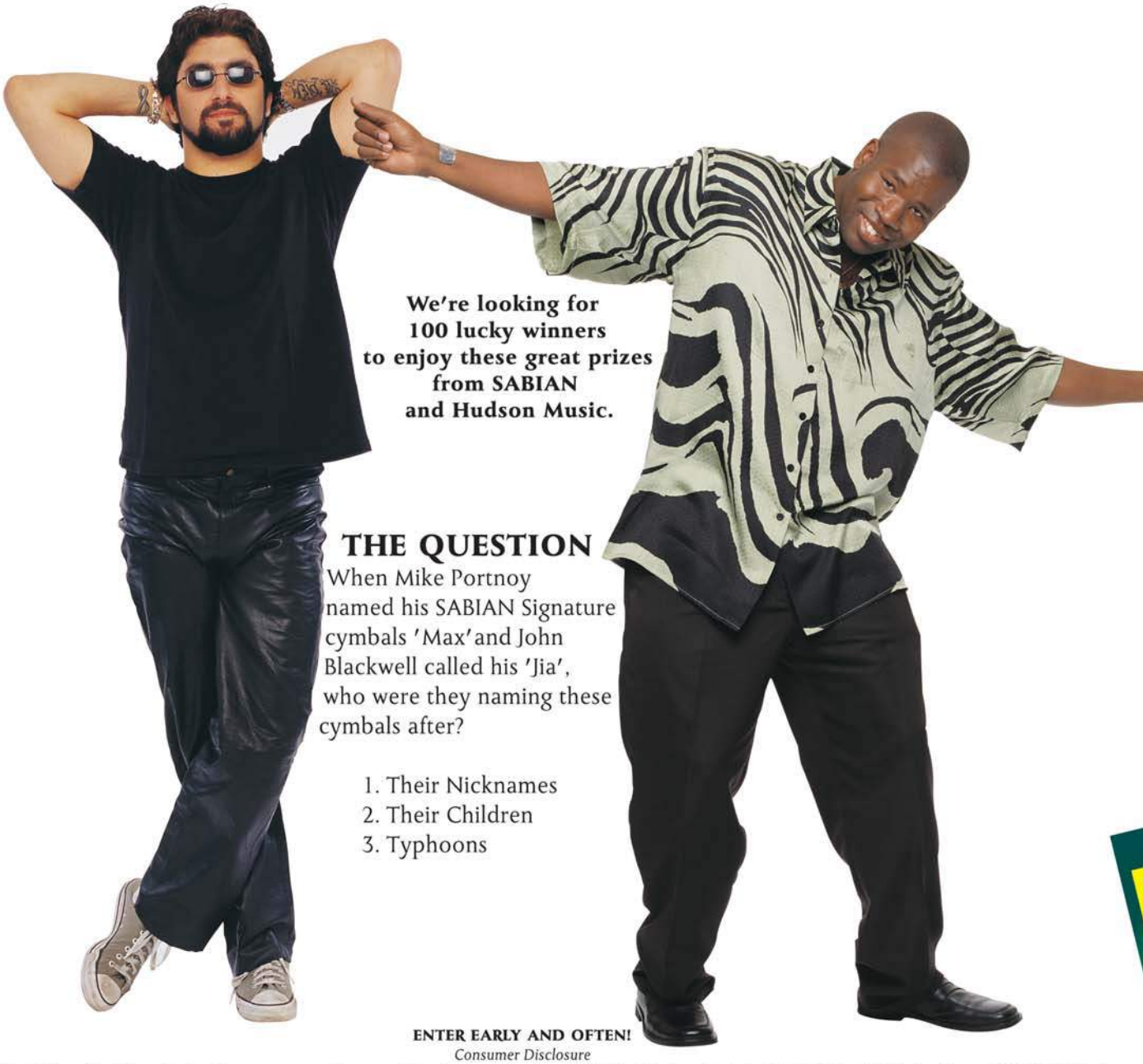

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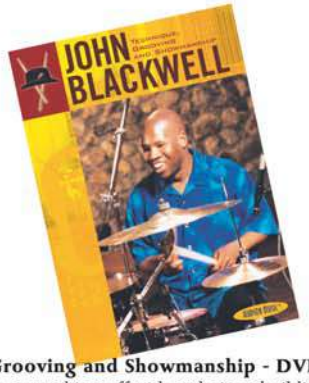

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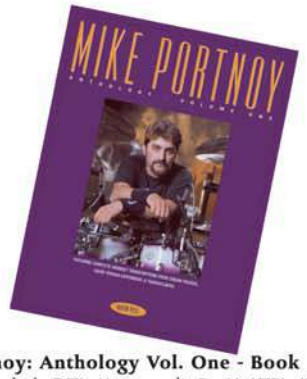

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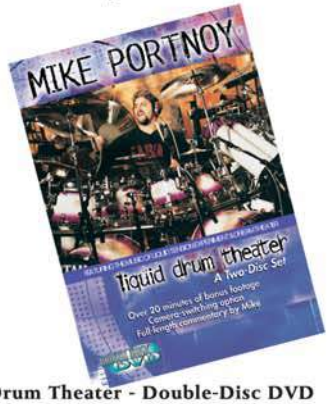

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The Drummers Of Screamo

by Jim DeRogatis

Convinced that nü-metal has run its course, many in the music industry are predicting that the next big thing in rock will be a sound that some have dubbed "screamo"—a merger of the smart, literate approach of emo, the intensity of hardcore punk, and the dexterity of progressive metal.

Short for "emotional" music, the roots of emo stretch back to the early '80s and bands such as Washington, DC's Rites Of Spring. The scene has really risen from the underground to mainstream attention in recent years via groups such as Jimmy Eat World, The Get Up Kids, and The Promise Ring. What these otherwise diverse bands share is a fondness for the dramatic use of contrasting loud and soft dynamics; heartfelt, intensely personal, and often poetic lyrics; and an ability to craft rousing, singalong melodies that are often propelled by jangling guitars.

Bands such as Glassjaw, Thursday, Thrice, Sparta, Poison The Well, and The Used take those sonic hallmarks and turn the adrenaline and the volume up to "11." The jangle is replaced by more intricate and aggressive guitar work, while the rhythms are revved up to pile-driver intensity. Always wary of labels, most of the musicians are reluctant to name the genre, or they simply call it "hardcore."

"To be honest with you, I always thought that hardcore would hit the mainstream ten years earlier than it did, back with bands like Judge and Gorilla Biscuits," says Glassjaw drummer Larry Gorman. "I thought, 'Wow, this stuff is so damn good.' But it took like ten years for the mall to catch up with it."

Whatever you call it (and regardless of whether or not it captures the hearts and minds of the mall-going masses), the music presents some unique challenges to drummers. The best of these players deliver complex rhythms at lightning speeds. At the same time, like the big band drummers of yesteryear, they're extremely sensitive to the vocalists (since this is a style in which the lyrics really matter), accenting lines that are particularly important at some spots, while laying back at others to give the singer more room. They also make impressive use of abrupt and often startling dynamic shifts, literally moving from a whisper to a roar.

"The dynamics are huge—really important," says Thrice drummer Riley Breckenridge. "It's something I definitely have to consciously think about. You get in a live setting and you're excited to play, and you have to think to yourself, 'I can't be hitting this hard right now.'"

Thursday drummer Tucker Rule takes a very different approach. "When I think too much about the dynamics," he says, "I totally space out and forget a part, mess up, or totally come off rhythm. If I just sit back and keep the left foot going on the hi-hat, I lose myself in the song. If I think, I'm done."

The drummers in this emerging genre share other qualities. Most play simple four-piece kits, favoring relatively small (often 8x12) rack toms and a single (though often very deep) bass drum. But there are key differences among them as well. In order to get a handle on the sound, where the players are coming from, and how they approach their instrument, *Modern Drummer* spoke to four of the most promising screamo skinsmen.

TONY HAJJAR, Sparta

In the eyes of most critics and quite a few musicians, the El Paso, Texas quintet At The Drive-In opened the door for the current wave of screamo bands. That group came to a premature halt in the spring of 2001, just as it was reaching its largest audience. But drummer Tony Hajjar continued working with guitarist/vocalist Jim Ward and bassist Paul Hinojos in the promising new quartet Sparta, which infuses emo with a hard-rock edge and a hint of electronic experimentation.

Self-effacing to a fault, Hajjar downplays the influence of his old group. "That's a part of our past that we're really proud of," he says, "and we worked really, really hard to get where we were in that band. If it did open doors, that's awesome, but I'm not gonna sit here and take any kind of credit. I'm lucky to be doing what I'm doing, and just because I got a chance before some other people did, that doesn't mean that I'm any better or in any special predicament."

The twenty-eight-year-old musician began playing the drums at age fifteen. "My cousin had a white Rogers kit with snap-on heads at his house," Hajjar says. "I used to play it, and all my cousins would get really mad because I'd interrupt the family parties." His brother eventually bought that set for him, and he started jamming on Metallica covers with a friend who played guitar.

Drumming was in part an escape for

Courtesy of Rhino

"I try my best to always think a little left of center."

Courtesy of Rhino

Hajjar: his mother was dying from cancer, and playing in the back room helped him block out the sounds of her pain. "When she passed away," he says, "I think I felt guilty, and I just stopped playing. I didn't start again until I turned eighteen, so I feel like I missed out on a lot of years of playing. All my friends were playing shows when they were thirteen or fourteen. I jumped on the bandwagon kind of late, so I had to practice extra hard to make up for lost time."

In concert and on disc—including Sparta's 2001 debut, *Wiretap Scars*, and the recent *Austere* EP—Hajjar is an agile but hard-hitting player, effortlessly negotiating complex time signatures and dynamic shifts. "I feel that same energy whether Jim is screaming a line or whispering," the drummer says. "I've been struggling with dynamics for years; the way I'm controlling myself now, I play six or seven songs in the set either with a sequencer or with a click, to really hold myself back. Then I'll turn it off because I'm used to it. It's just for practice more than anything."

Odd meters throw many young drummers, but Hajjar says they feel like second nature to him. "If I'm playing in 4/4, 5/4, 6/8, or 12/4," he says, "I know where to push it and where to accent. I hardly ever think in 4/4. I try my best to always think a little left of center, until I'm pretty much caught and the rest of the band goes, 'It's okay to play a simple beat.'"

Electronics enter the mix on songs such as "Cataract" and "Vacant Skies," when Hajjar programs one beat into a sequencer, then plays live drums over it, creating some nicely layered rhythms. He favors a basic Tama set (8x12 and 14x16 toms, a 20x24 kick, and a $6^1/_2$x14 snare), but uses triggers to open a world of other sonic possibilities. "I'm not the kind of guy who adds four splashes and a 12" snare," he says. But with the triggers, Tony is able to add anything from timbales to timpani with the touch of a button.

"I like to play with a lot of power, but at the same time not just be a straight 4/4 basher," Hajjar says of his overall approach. "I realize that's what I'm good at—hitting hard—but I'm always trying to think outside the box. I constantly push myself in that respect."

TUCKER RULE, Thursday

At the ripe old age of twenty-three, Tucker Rule has been playing music for only five years, and New Jersey's Thursday is the first group he's ever performed with. But his relative lack of experience belies his confidence behind the drums, where he is a master of forward propulsion and deft dynamic turnarounds.

"I never took a lesson, and I never really played along to records," Rule admits. "I would listen to records and watch any time someone played live on television. Hearing it was great, but *seeing* it showed me how to do it."

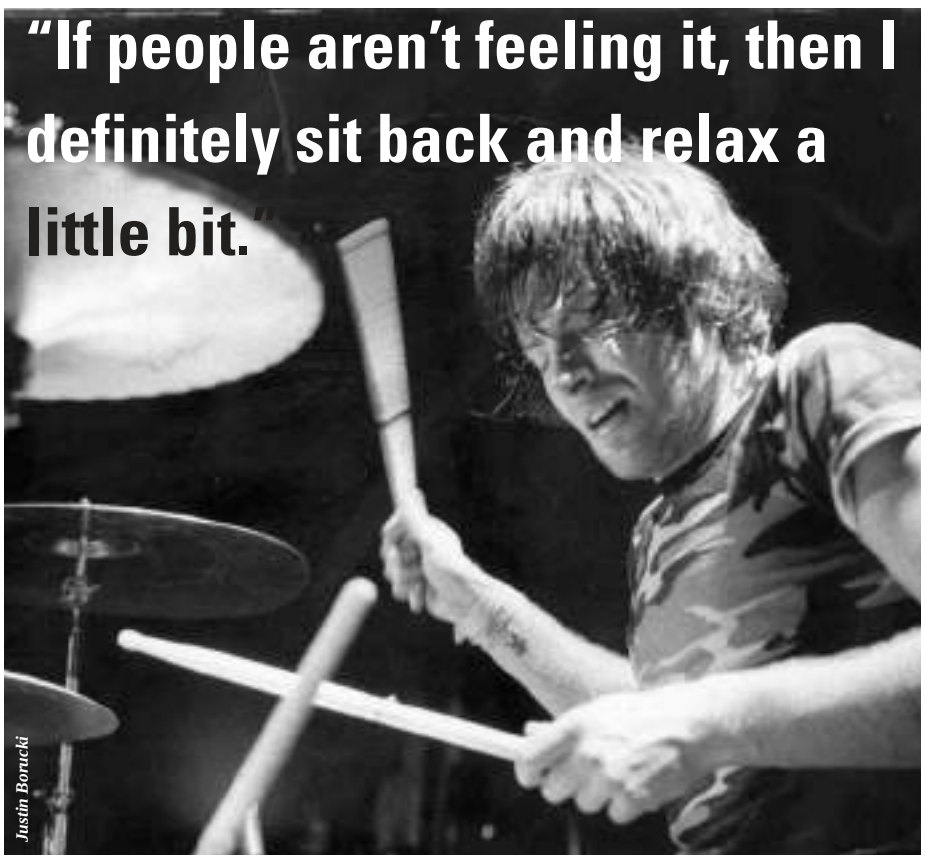
While Rule grew up appreciating punk and hardcore—"I was always a big fan of Sammy Siegler from Gorilla Biscuits and Alan Cage of Quicksand, and of course Dave Grohl on the Nirvana records"—he was also a fan of inventive hip-hop groups like Gang Starr and The Roots. That may explain his devotion to the groove. "Ahmir ?uestlove Thompson is a total monster," Rule says. "And that MTV 'Unplugged' show The Roots did with Jay-Z—I'm totally stealing everything from it."

After M2 made a hit of the video for "Understanding In A Car Crash," one of several standout tracks on Thursday's second album, *Full Collapse*, the quintet graduated from the indie ranks to Island Records, where it is said to be a top priority. But Rule insists that the group isn't worried about high expectations. "The whole band has this attitude that we're just going to continue on the way we've always done things," he says. "Island has people like P.J. Harvey, who they never tried to change. I think that's the freedom they'll give to us, and I don't think I'll have very much pressure beside the fact that I always want to better myself. It's all pressure from within."

Still, it was inspiring during last summer's Warped Tour to see thousands of young fans enthusiastically singing every word of Thursday's songs. That kind of devotion naturally has an impact behind the drums.

"When we're writing the stuff," Rule says, "we never hear vocals or have lyrics; that comes later during the recording process. So I never conjure up a feeling from a vocal part when we write it. But live, the songs take on a different meaning. I really sit back and think about it sometimes when I have a break in the song and the kids are singing louder than the singer. You don't think about the content as much as how it's affecting the people in the crowd. If people aren't feeling it, then I definitely sit back and relax a little bit. But I play for the punch—I love the punch."

"If people aren't feeling it, then I definitely sit back and relax a little bit."



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RILEY BRECKENRIDGE, Thrice

Though it didn't seem like it at the time, it was a fortunate accident that gave Riley Breckenridge his start playing drums. "I was playing high school football," he says, "and I blew out my knee during my senior year. I needed something to do, so I picked up the drums and started playing, and I just totally fell in love with them."

It was also coincidence that led Breckenridge to join Thrice. The group was formed in Irvine, California in 1998 by guitarist Teppei Teranishi and singer Dustin Kensrue. Riley's brother Ed played bass in the band. "I was finishing college," Riley says, "and I didn't know if I really wanted to do the band thing anymore, because I was kind of content just playing by myself. But they needed a drummer and I thought it would be fun just to mess around with them. Four years later, I'm still here. I don't want to do anything else at this point. I'm having the best time of my life, and I'm totally grateful for all the opportunities we've had."

The twenty-seven-year-old musician grew up listening to metal, and that influence looms large in his playing, as in his use of the double bass pedal. "One of my favorite things is something I picked up from Mike Portnoy, doing alternating hands and feet stuff—breaking up a fill with two strokes with the hands and two with the feet, for instance," he says. "I just try to use it as tastefully as possible. I think the more you use double bass, the less important it becomes. You might listen to a band where it's just this solid double bass run for like three songs in a row, and that just becomes droning.

"Overall my playing is pretty simple," Riley adds, "and I try to make a point not to step all over the lyrics or the guitar lines by throwing every fill I know into a song. I think it's really important to let the lyrics breathe. They're really important, and I want to make sure people hear them, and that they make people think."

After a strong sophomore album, *The Illusion Of Safety*, Thrice was also signed to Island. The band plans to record its major-label debut shortly, and Breckenridge is devoted to bringing his chops to a new level for that offering. "In Orange County," the drummer says, "if you make any kind of noise, the cops are on you in a second. So it's pretty much impossible to practice. But I just got one of those mesh-head practice kits, and now I can practice at any hour for as long as I want. It's made a huge difference in my playing; I've only had them for two months, but I've seen jumps in my playing like you couldn't imagine."

Joey Ready

Joey Ready

"I think the more you use double bass, the less important it becomes. I try to use it as tastefully as possible."

LARRY GORMAN, Glassjaw

In 2000, when Larry Gorman took over the drum throne with Long Island's Glassjaw, he was stepping into a coveted position: Sammy Siegler (ex-Gorilla Biscuits, currently of Rival Schools) had played on the group's first album, and the band was about to record its second release, *Worship And Tribute*, for Warner Bros.

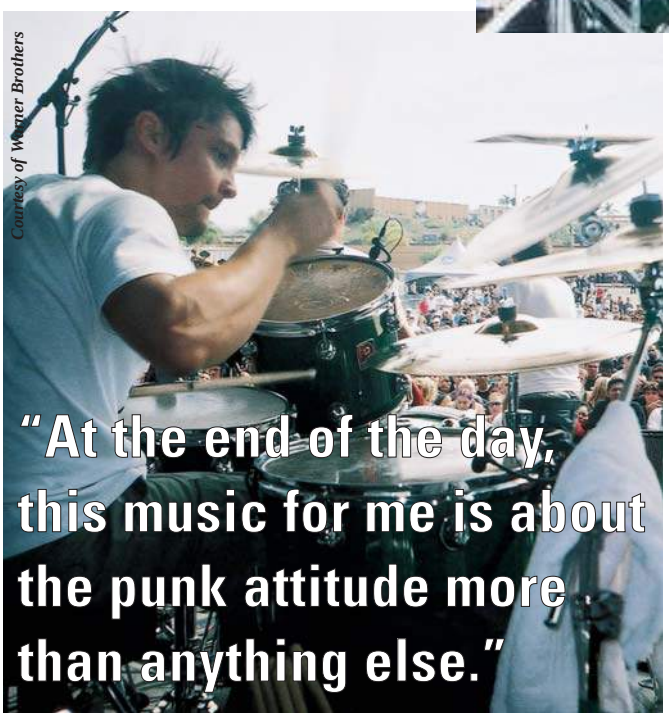
As it turns out, producer Ross Robinson opted to use a session drummer that he was more familiar with, and the thirty-year-old Gorman didn't get to play on the disc. (There is a special ring of hell reserved for producers like this.) But Gorman's intricate yet powerful playing has taken the group to a new level, as evidenced by its galvanizing appearances on last summer's Ozzfest tour, where it graduated from the second stage to a slot on the main stage.

"I've never taken a lesson; I really don't know about the academics of drumming at all," Gorman says. "I just go up there and do it. It's pure desire."

Surrounded by music in Queens, New York—his father played bass in a metal band—Gorman began playing the drums at age fourteen. He cut his teeth on Metallica and Slayer before he discovered hardcore punk. "I was seeing guys walking around my neighborhood with short, bleached-blonde hair," he recalls, "weird punker dudes with guitars, and I was like, 'What's going on?' Then I was introduced to a band called Token Entry, from Astoria, who were basically the rudest street punk you could hear at the time. I was like, 'This is it! This is what I want to play for the rest of my life!'"

Gorman defines hardcore or screamo as a move to "take the anger and angst of metal away from the decadence and toward something more progressive." In Glassjaw's music, this ambition can be heard in a song like "The Gillette Cavalcade Of Sports," which incorporates a rhythm that is almost like a samba on speed. Gorman also puts his stamp on the sound by adding a busy but powerful bass drum and intricate but musical fills. Still, he insists that it's the energy that matters most.

Courtesy of Warner Brothers


Courtesy of Warner Brothers

"At the end of the day, this music for me is about the punk attitude more than anything else."

"At the end of the day, this music for me is about the punk attitude more than anything else," he says. "I grew up watching drummers like Alan Cage, who was in a band called Beyond before he joined Quicksand. He was like my teacher; I would watch him rehearse in his basement and just go, 'My god, that guy is sick!' Most of my influences have just been that raw, heavy-hitting kind of drummer, and that's what I'm really

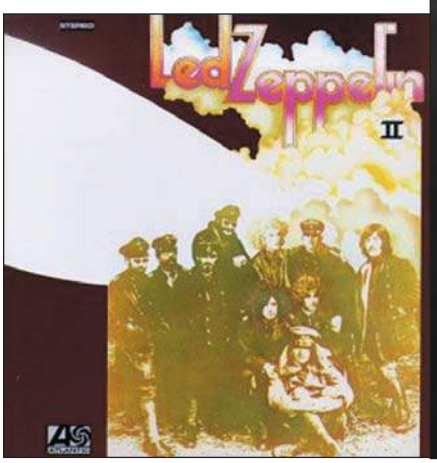
Eddie Kramer

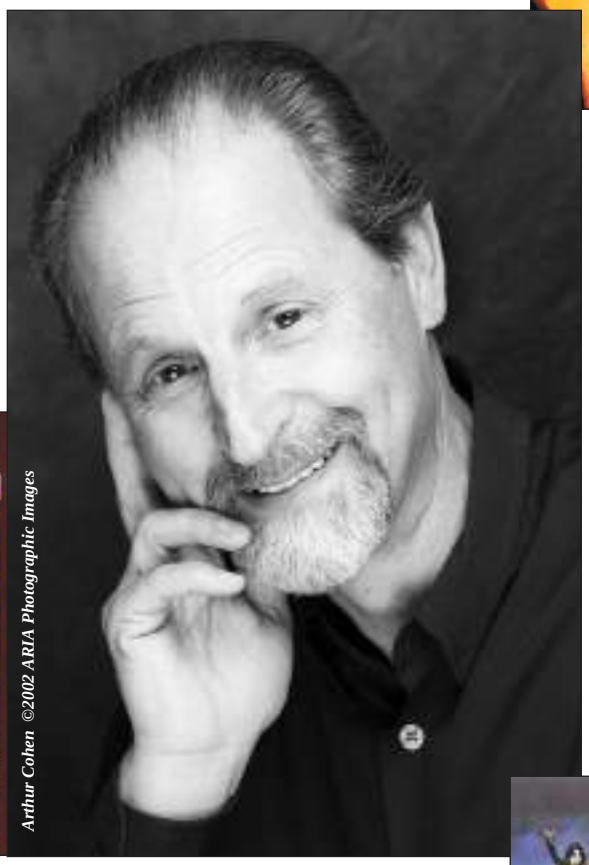
It's Only Rock 'N' Roll

by Billy Amendola

Producer/engineer Eddie Kramer's credits are so impressive, it's hard to know where to begin. Eddie was born in South Africa, and moved to England at the age of nineteen. There he began work at Pye Studios, engineering for artists ranging from Sammy Davis Jr. to The Kinks. In the '60s he worked with Traffic and The Rolling Stones, before hooking up with Jimi Hendrix.

Eddie didn't just record Hendrix. He and Jimi formed a friendship that led to the opening of Electric Lady Studios in New York City. From then on Eddie was involved in one classic recording after another. He engineered and/or produced albums by Santana, David Bowie, Joe Cocker, Peter Frampton, Derek & The Dominoes, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, KISS, and just about every other major name in rock history—including the original *Woodstock* album. Eddie really *has* done it all. And the best thing is, he's *still* doing it.




Arthur Cohen ©2002 ARIA Photographic Images

MD: Let's start with two words: John Bonham.

Eddie: Bonham was brilliant in the studio—a genius. He had the ability to absorb complicated patterns yet still put this *amazing* thud within the context of the song. And no matter how pretty or how complicated it was, it still rocked the house. Jimmy Page would work out the complicated parts with John—different rhythms and time signatures—and the guy was just astounding, he was so fast at getting the parts right. We never did more than a couple of takes, as far as I can remember. And John was very focused, very sober in the studio. He would always put his arm around me and say, "Oh, I know you are going to get me my sound. And if you mess it up, I'm going to kill you." [laughs] He was actually very polite and lovely when he was sober. But when he got drunk, you just couldn't get near him.

MD: Were you there for the recording of "Moby Dick"?

Eddie: They started the recording of *Led Zeppelin II* over in England. I came on board in '69, when they were on tour in America. They'd travel around with this big trunk of tapes. I recorded parts of "Moby Dick" in one studio, and parts of the solo in another studio. Eventually we ended up at A&R Studios, where I cut a new drum solo for "Moby

"People who spend two days getting a drum sound should be hung! If I can't get a drum sound in twenty minutes—and I mean that dead seriously—I'll walk out."

Dick" and did a lot of overdubbing of Jimmy's guitar parts. We recorded some tracks at an 8-track studio somewhere on Broadway, but I can't remember the name of it…it's so long ago. We also did "Living Loving Maid" there. Jimmy Page and I mixed the whole album in two days at A&R. Can you imagine?

MD: When you recorded "Moby Dick," was John's kit out in the open?

Eddie: Oh, yeah. I've never recorded drums in a drum booth. That would be terrible.

MD: Do you remember the mic' setup on the kit?

Eddie: There were some room mic's and a few close mic's. It was a different style of recording in those days.

MD: Do you remember what mic's you used?

Eddie: No, and even if I did I wouldn't say, because I like to keep that to myself. John's sound, though, was basically down to his playing and his kit.

So much of any drummer's sound involves that drummer's technique of hitting the drum. Do you bring your wrist up high and drop it down in a fast motion, or do you keep it low and smack the drum? John hit so hard it was ridiculous.

MD: But he wasn't a basher.

Eddie: No, no. There's a *big* difference between bashing and hitting hard. Hitting hard is a technique. I'm not a drummer, but I've watched enough drummers to know that it all depends on how you snap your wrist down and how you hold the sticks. John got such a powerful sound out of the kit that I could have thrown up a junk microphone and it would have been fine, because it still would have sounded like *him*. And obviously his sound would improve depending on the room that we were recording in. For instance, the stuff we did in '72 at Stargroves, at Mick Jagger's house—like "D'Yer Mak'er" and "Dancing Days"—had wonderful drum sounds because the room just sounded phenomenal. John filled the whole room with sound.

MD: Could you take a lousy drummer and make him sound good?

Eddie: Not really, no, because quite frankly I would never have a lousy drummer in a band. I'd fire him first. [laughs]

MD: What qualities do you look for in a drummer?

Eddie: Somebody with intelligence. The drummers who are the smartest are the

Kramer's Krew

Here's a short list of some of the drummers Eddie has recorded.

Carmine Appice
Mick Avory
John Bonham
Jim Capaldi
Peter Criss
Dino Danelli
Anton Fig
Jim Gordon
Jim Keltner
Buddy Miles
Mitch Mitchell
Jerry Shirley
Ringo Starr
Charlie Watts

best. I'm not interested in drummers who just bash. I'm interested in drummers who have decent technique and are sensitive to the song. As great as Bonham was, you don't only listen to the drumming. It's the whole package. It's what he's doing to support what's going on in the music.

But, of course, you also couldn't imagine that music without John. He was an integral part of the band. That's what I look for in terms of what a drummer is going to bring to the party. You've got to drum with intelligence. You have to think about the structure of the song, about your tuning, about what cymbals you are using, about dynamics. All these things come into play. I start a project with the drums. If the drums aren't right, it's *never* going to happen.

By the way, when I get a drum sound, I don't use the drummer initially. I'll get a drum tech or a studio assistant to bang on the kit and make sure everything is working. I'll bring the drummer in only when that is done, because I don't want him or her tired out. And I want to say right now that people who spend two days getting a drum sound should be hung! What a waste of time. If I can't get a drum sound in twenty minutes—and I mean that dead seriously—I'll walk out. This whole anal "The hi-hat is not 110% perfect" stuff...get out of here with that. If you've done your homework, if you know your mic's and your board and your room, and if the drummer is really good, it's *bada bing*, *bada boom*. You can fine-tune it after.

MD: How many takes do you feel is too many for a drummer?

Eddie: It depends on what you're doing. In the old days, people never rehearsed much. Sometimes a song wouldn't be really locked in yet, so you'd spend a few hours in the studio getting it together. Today I like to make sure I've done my homework with the band in pre-production. Then when they walk in the studio we're basically ready to go.

I like to try to get things down in no more than three takes, because the energy level is all there. If the band knows their material and they're all listening to each other, you should be able to get tracks fairly rapidly. Of course, that doesn't always apply. Sometimes we'll do ten takes, and it's just not happening. Then I'll say, "This isn't working, guys. Let's go to another song." Then we come back and hit it again, and we get it. And sometimes I'll edit takes together, using an intro and a verse from one take and a chorus from another.

Sometimes it takes a drummer—or a whole band—a while to get a new tune right in the studio, even though they've rehearsed it. Maybe the dynamics are different. Maybe it just *sounds* different in that room. So we try things. "That tom sound isn't working. Maybe more open hi-hats.... Maybe smaller hi-hats..... Maybe a wood snare instead of a metal snare…." All these parameters change the tonality of the drums—which, in turn, changes the character of the song when we're listening to it.

MD: How do you like to record percussion?

Eddie: I have a particular technique for recording congas. I like to get a lot of tube mic's in there. You don't want to get the mic's too close. There's an optimum position. You've just got to put your ear where the sound is coming from and go accordingly.

MD: Do you prefer to record percussion alone or with the rhythm section?

Eddie: It depends. If it's a pop record I'll probably want to put the percussion on later, because inevitably it will be fine-tuned to the actual song. We might want to change from a tambourine to a shaker in the middle of the verse to match some subtle change in the vocal feel. It's kind of tough to concentrate on that stuff when the initial track is being cut, so we'd do it afterwards.

However, if it's, say, a Santana track, then I'd go live with the guys because there's an interaction between the congas and the timbales or whatever Latin instrument is going to be integrated with the whole feel.

MD: How about the drums? Do you like to record them alone, or with the rhythm section, or with just the bass?

Eddie: Every record is different. Personally, I think recording drums by themselves is silly. When a band plays, they don't play without the drummer, they all play together. That quality is missing on a lot of recordings today because they're done in bits and pieces.

That being said, inevitably there are some rock recordings that I do where it's, "Ignore the guitars, man, we're just doing it as a guide. We're just going for the drums and maybe the bass." And you always want to get a great drum track first. Still, I like to try to get as much as possible live. There's something unique that happens when you have a great guitar player, a great bass player, and a great drummer all interacting. You're not going to get that as an overdub.

MD: Are you one of those engineers/producers who records *everything*?

Eddie: The tape rolls from the moment the band walks in the studio. You *never* know what you're going to get. You might get a magic take that you'll never be able to get again.

MD: Your career "broke big" when you recorded Jimi Hendrix. Besides his legendary abilities on guitar, didn't he also play drums?

Eddie: Oh yeah, and he was a decent drummer. I watched him play many times in the studio, but I never actually recorded him. He was ambidextrous, so he could play Mitch Mitchell's right-handed kit. He would show Mitch things he was thinking of, and later on he did the same for Buddy

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Miles. Jimi knew what he was looking for, and he had a good feel.

MD: What are your thoughts on Mitch Mitchell?

Eddie: Mitch was also a genius in the sense that he was able to keep up with Jimi. He's probably one of the only drummers I know who could. Mitch had technical training as a jazz drummer. The way he held his sticks was very traditional, and he had good independence. And his fills are beautiful! You'd think, "How the hell is he going to come out of that fill?" because it sounded so wacky and out of time. But he always landed on one, which I thought was very cool. I loved his playing; he was very sensitive. He knew just what to play. And Jimi and Mitch had a wonderful rapport.

MD: And Buddy Miles?

Eddie: Buddy was the master of funk and fatback. He was the perfect drummer for Band Of Gypsys, which was Jimi going back to his groove-oriented blues/funk roots. There was nobody like Buddy for that music. As Mitch said in the Band Of Gypsys movie, "Yeah, he's a bloody cement mixer." It's very funny.

MD: How did you come to engineer for The Beatles?

Eddie: I only worked with The Beatles twice. That was on "All You Need Is Love" and "Baby You're A Rich Man." They wanted to record "All You Need..." for a live TV satellite broadcast. I did the basic track at Olympic Studios. Then they went back to EMI Studios and played back what I recorded, and overdubbed to that.

MD: How was that experience?

Eddie: It was great—very simple, very straight-ahead, no bullshit. It was the kind of situation that could be very intimidating, as you can imagine. The Beatles were like royalty, and it was an honor working with them. I can't remember much about the sessions, other than that George Martin was in complete charge.

MD: How old were you?

Eddie: I was in my twenties. I had worked with The Stones, Hendrix, Traffic, and all these bands—but there was *nothing* like The Beatles.

MD: The list of your recordings over the years includes so many of my own favorite records, like *Fotomaker*. That was Dino Danelli's project after leaving The Rascals.

Eddie: *Fotomaker* was a great record. I loved that band. And Dino Danelli was cool. I loved his drumming. I liked his style and his feel. In a way, it kind of related to Bonham's drumming. Dino's an unsung hero of the drums.

> "Rock 'n' roll is supposed to be loose. People want to have a good time. They're expressing a raw emotion. Life isn't perfect, and music shouldn't be, either."

MD: I'll name some drummers you've worked with. Tell me what comes to mind. First...Carmine Appice.

Eddie: I did "Some Velvet Morning" when he was with Vanilla Fudge. But I think Carmine's best drumming was during the period when he was in Cactus. I thought their records were amazing. He was really on top of it at that point, for me. He hit very hard too. He's pretty thunderous.

MD: Jim Gordon.

Eddie: I recorded Gordon and Jim Keltner together at the Fillmore East on *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*. I thought the two of them were magnificent. They listened to each other, they played off each other, their timing was perfect—and they *never* got in each other's way. I've recorded each of them separately, but together they were just remarkable.

MD: Anton Fig.

Eddie: Anton is a fellow South African. I used to see him in New York City playing with Spider. I'm not sure how he met Ace Frehley, but it was a very fortunate thing because his playing on Ace's records is killer. Some of those drum fills are spectacular. I love Anton's technique. He's a very forceful player. He really pulsates underneath the artist and kicks him in the butt. He was an essential part of Frehley's Comet.

MD: That leads us to Peter Criss.

Eddie: I did the demo that got KISS their record deal. When they first came in, it was Peter from Brooklyn, Ace from the Bronx, and these two Jewish guys from Queens. Peter was nervous. He wanted to make sure he was doing everything right. But those demos sound fantastic. You can hear them on the KISS box set. What Peter lacked in technique he made up for in energy. He was never a brilliant drummer, technically speaking, but he had a terrific feel.

MD: Jerry Shirley, on Humble Pie's *Rockin' The Fillmore*.

Eddie: *That* was a killer band, with Peter Frampton and Steve Marriott. Jerry was sweet. He's from what I call the "old English school of drummers." He knew Bonham and Charlie Watts, and all the drummers from the other English bands. And everybody respected him. Jerry was great.

MD: Is there a drummer you never worked with who you would have liked to?

Eddie: Keith Moon. What a *great* drummer. I never had the privilege of working with The Who, but I did hang out with Moony a few times. He was a nut, but he was just the best person to be with.

MD: When you're producing, will you suggest drum parts?

Eddie: Sure, all the time. After all these years, I think I have a pretty good idea of what does and doesn't help a song. I'll say, "You know, in the verse you should lay off the tom. Just give me a straight snare thing. When it gets to the chorus, lay into the hi-hat, and instead of closed, make it open." Simple stuff. Like I say, it ain't rocket science. Too many people are so anal about it. "Uh...on the fourth hi-hat beat in the second bar…." Get out of here.

MD: You can easily lose the feel when you start doing that.

Eddie: And now in Pro Tools you've got this "beat detective" thing to make the time metrically perfect. Come on! I want the song to breathe. I want it to have ups and downs. It can't be *radically* out of time, of

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HUDSON MUSIC

Eddie Kramer

course, but a little movement within the context of the song is fine. Listen to every great album that you love, whether it's Hendrix or The Stones or The Beatles. They didn't use a click track. It all flowed up and down.

MD: You've done your share of live albums. What's the key to a successful live recording?

Eddie: You must remember that the actual live performance is primary. I've got to make sure that I don't interfere with that performance, because without it I get shit. The more invisible I am, the better. Obviously the band knows the recording is happening. But I want to make it as clear as possible to them, "Look, just go do your thing. Don't worry about me. If there are mistakes we'll fix them later."

Sometimes there *are* mistakes. I *love* the mistakes. You think Zeppelin didn't have mistakes? Jimmy Page *traded* on those mistakes. He thought they were the coolest things. Jimi Hendrix did too. We're not talking about Mozart or Beethoven or Bach. We're talking about twentieth-century hairy-ass rock 'n' roll, and rock 'n' roll is *supposed* to be loose. People want to have a good time. They're expressing a raw emotion. Life isn't perfect, and music shouldn't be, either.

To see some of Eddie Kramer's personal photos of classic-rock greats, visit www.ariaphotos.com.

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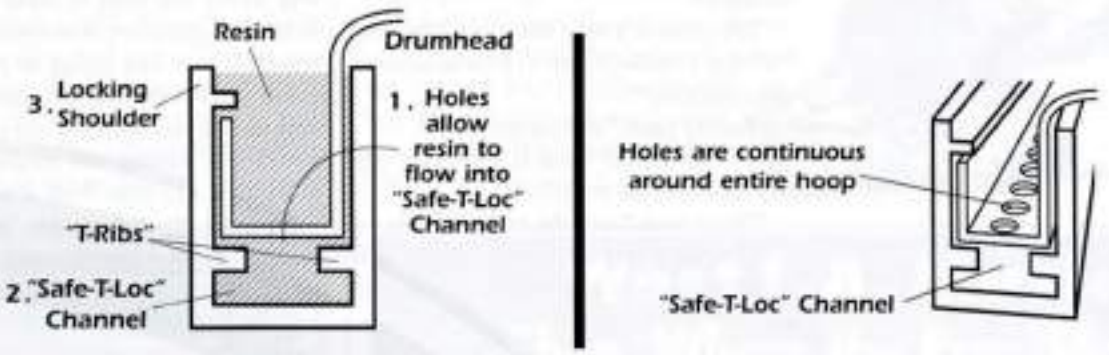

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Try Softer

Avoiding Mental Obstacles

by Robert P. Smith

A young boy traveled across Japan to the school of a famous martial artist. When he arrived at the school he was given an audience by the sensei.

"What do you wish from me?" the master asked.

"I wish to be your student and become the finest karateka in the land," the boy replied. "How long must I study?"

"Ten years at least," the master answered.

"Ten years is a long time," said the boy. "What if I studied twice as hard as all your other students?"

"Twenty years," replied the master.

"Twenty years! What if I practice day and night with all my effort?"

"Thirty years," was the master's reply.

"How is it that each time I say I will work harder, you tell me that it will take longer?" the boy asked.

I was trying too hard to make something work, and therefore was constantly frustrated. It was like trying to push over a stone wall. The trick I was missing was simple: Don't try to push the wall over. Walk around it.

"The answer is clear. When one eye is fixed upon your destination, there is only one eye left with which to find the Way."

This story by an anonymous author hit me like a ton of bricks. Listening to the great drummers of the past and present, I found myself wandering, trying to find my "way" to the greatness they had discovered. My path diverged frequently. Small bits of information were processed, but little progress was attained. That is, until I started trying less, or better yet, "trying softer."

Many of my students were constantly having impediments thrown up in front of them by their own minds. They complained that "They just couldn't get it" and that "They would never be good at this." I had similar thoughts while practicing. I was trying too hard to make something work, and therefore was constantly frustrated. It was like trying to push over a stone wall—continually exerting force but only ending up exhausted and drained. The trick I was missing was simple: Don't try to push the wall over. Walk around it.

Teaching my students this "trick" wasn't easy. (Nor was it easy to teach myself.) To let go of negative thoughts and allow the body to function without interference from the mind requires patience and, contradictorily, concentration. How focused are we when we're practicing? Are our thoughts solely on the one exercise? Or are we thinking about conquering the entire page so that we can finally reach that level of "greatness?" Maybe we're even thinking about how, after we've finished our practice, we're going to impress our fellow players with these new skills. At that moment, we've failed.

The exercises we work on are just that: exercises. They're designed to give us proficiency in a well-defined, narrow area. Just as we do sit-ups to tone our midsection, so certain exercises work to "tone" specific areas of drumming. Absolute focus on these given exercises is necessary in order for us to achieve their full effect.

A simple process for achieving that focus is to work on your breathing. Before practicing, start inhaling and exhaling very slowly, counting to five with every breath in and out. Go slow. Fill your lungs to capacity. Focus only on the counting. Do

this until you feel relaxed. (And believe me, you will.)

Now sit down at your pad or drumset. Look at the first exercise. Visualize that exercise as the only one on the page, with the rest of the page totally blank. Now, very deliberately, start the exercise.

Calculate every movement. Think about your arms and hands and how they move. Think about the space between each note. There is only you and the exercise. Don't worry about the time or about all the other exercises you want to get to. There is only one exercise in the present, so *be* there. After you feel you have sufficiently worked on that exercise, stop. Clear your mind and move on to the next.

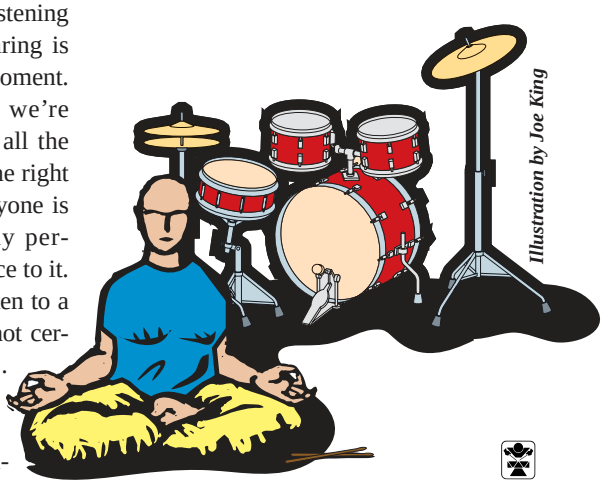
You'll find that practicing in this matter can be meditative. Focusing for long periods of time increases your concentration and your confidence. Patience is increased, and decision-making becomes easier. This centered feeling will stay with you long after you leave the practice room. You may only get to five or six exercises in an hour, and that may bother you in the beginning. However, by focusing intently on the present, you are ensuring your future.

This focus can also be attained while performing live. How many times has this happened: We feel that the band is having an "off" night, so we push and prod and force ideas out in an attempt to create a spark. Or maybe we've just played a poor solo chorus, so we try to make up for it by playing another—only to make matters worse. Again we need to "try softer."

When I find myself in these situations, I close my eyes and visualize that I'm driving my car in a very scenic area. I'm listening to the radio, and the music I'm hearing is the band I'm playing with at that moment. The song I'm hearing is the song we're playing. But it's on the radio, with all the parts completed. All the fills are in the right spot, the groove is perfect, and everyone is together. It sounds like a perfectly performed recording, and I'm an audience to it.

Listen to the band the way you listen to a song. Hear the entire band at once, not certain parts of it (especially yourself). You are now entirely focused on the music. You're hearing everything as if it was finished (even though, in reality, you're creating it at that moment). Every note has already been played. You don't have to try to make it amazing. It already is! There's no need to try harder to make it sound good. Do this for just one song, and I guarantee that you'll be hearing some of the greatest music you've ever been a part of.

The past and future are uncontrollable entities. Focus on where you are now. You *will* achieve, through patience and concentration. Remember the old adage: "It's the journey, not the destination."



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Shure Beta 52A And Beta 56A Microphones

Never a company to rest on their laurels, Shure has replaced their popular Beta 52 and Beta 56 drum mic's with upgraded "A" versions. Maintaining the proven sound quality of the original Beta 52 and Beta 56 microphone cartridges, the new models are outfitted with features designed to enhance their form and function.

52A

56A

Among the changes is the addition of a larger adjustment knob and a more durable tightening mechanism to facilitate easier positioning. Both articulating mic's now also employ a wider mounting base capable of accommodating a larger range of microphone stands. (The Beta 56A will even work with the LP Claw.) List prices are $336.70 for the Beta 52A and $243.49 for the Beta 56A. Y **(847) 866-2200, www.shure.com.**

On The March

Going For The Gold

Evans MX Gold Standard Marching Snare Batter

Evans calls its Gold Standard marching snare batter "the ultimate blend of polyester film and Aramid fiber." A unique lamination process gives the Gold Standard "an extended lifespan with resistance to delamination and splitting." The woven Aramid fibers are additionally protected against fraying on the underside, when top-head internal snare units are engaged.

MX Gold Standard heads keep with the recent trend toward lower batter head tensioning by offering mid-range tunability with increased low-end response. But testing has also proved that the Gold Standard exhibits superior performance in the extreme upper range. Top-ranking drum corps using Evans heads at the 2002 DCI World Championships included The Bluecoats, The Crossmen, and The Phantom Regiment. Y **(800) 323-2746, www.evansdrumheads.com.**

Creating Good Vibes

Vic Firth Brian Mason Signature Corpsmaster Keyboard Mallets

Marching specialist Brian Mason designed his Vic Firth Corpsmaster signature mallets with the following objectives: 1) To maximize the resonant output of any keyboard in any given register. 2) To give the performer a more "weighted" stroke (increasing resonance) along with an eye-catching look that makes the player's involvement more visible. 3) To produce the best and most characteristic sound in a particular range on a particular instrument, while having the flexibility to "cross over" for use on other keyboard instruments.

M81

M85

The line includes M80 (medium soft), M81 (soft), and M82 (medium hard) yarn-wound models, as well as M84 (soft) and M85 (medium hard) cord wound models. Each is specifically tailored to produce specific tonalities and maximum sound and projection on marimbas, vibraphones, and xylophones for outdoor use. Y **(781) 326-3455, www.vicfirth.com.**

Stand And Be Counted

MRP Hardware

MRP drum builder Mark Ross has spent over a year and a half developing a new line of drum hardware made "with the working player in mind." Machined in MRP's facility on Long Island, the stands are made of a special steel alloy said to be 26% stronger than typical double-braced stands, while weighing 11% to 19% less. They feature "a unique industrial look" that complements MRP's drum lugs. Chrome finish is standard, but black chrome finish is also available "for a dramatic statement." MRP Hardware is available directly from the company only. Prices are: $99 for a straight cymbal stand or snare stand, $109 for a boom stand, and $129 for a hi-hat stand. Black chrome finish is $50 extra per stand. Y **(516) 568-2820,** **www.mrpdrums.com.**

The Sun In The Morning And The Drum At Night

Moon Drums

Moon Drum Co. offers custom drums with hand-drilled shells and hand-cut bearing edges. Drum designs are limited "only by the customer's imagination." Each drum is bench-tested before being released. According to the makers, any drum that doesn't pass a stringent test for quality, appearance, fit, and sound will not be sold.

"Full Moon" models feature die-cast hoops and a Nickel Drumworks throw-off. Recent examples include a 6½x14 drum featuring a 6-ply natural maple shell with 10-ply reinforcement rings and brass fittings, and a 5x14 10-ply maple drum (with no rings) finished in blue with chrome hardware. Current Moon Drum artists include Chris Kontos (Testament, The Servants), Jeff Gomes (M.I.R.V.), and John Fittipaldi (session drummer with John Lee Hooker and The Platters).

Y **(707) 863-6569,** **space19@iscweb.com**

Just In Case

Don't Get Shell-Shocked

Hardcase New Generation Cases

Made from waterproof high-impact polyethylene, Hardcase drum, percussion, and hardware cases are said to be so strong that you can jump on them, and so impervious to moisture that they will not disintegrate if they get wet. Polypropylene straps with durable quick-lock clips provide fast and secure closing. Internal foam grip pads in the lids and bases hold and protect the contents, while strong amplifier-type handles make carrying easy and comfortable.

All cases are molded in one piece, so there are no rivets or joins to break or come apart. Ribs in the body and lid of each case allow for secure stacking of all sizes when the cases are full. When they're empty, they can nest inside one another for compact storage. Models are available for virtually all drums and percussion instruments, electronics, cymbals, hardware, and accessories. Y **(011) 44 01246 456525,** **www.hardcase.com.**

Rollin' Down The Alli

Gator Cases Wheeled Utility Case

Every drummer has loose equipment that needs protection—and an easy way to move it. To meet that need, Gator has created the GX-42 wheeled utility case. It's constructed of nearly indestructible polyethylene, and it features lockable twist latches and heavy-duty valances to withstand the abuse of life on the road.

The interior of the case can be adjusted to your specific needs. There are fifteen foam mic' drops, two movable dividers, and a movable zippered pouch. Roller-blade-style wheels and a handle are included to make transporting the case convenient. Offset side carrying handles are also provided, making it easy to lift the entire case (either alone or with help). Suggested retail price is $179.99. Y **(813) 221-419,** **www.gatorcases.com.**

Out Of Africa

Handmade Rhythm Ashikos

Handmade Rhythm Ashikos are the work of master woodworker Alexander K. Smith. Each drum features uniquely beautiful wood that has been sawn into six matching pairs and laminated to a maple or custom-wood stave core. Available custom options include abalone inlay and walnut or purpleheart wood encircling the bottom of the drum. The company has also developed a unique method for mounting natural goat and calf skins, ensuring high tension while maintaining the traditional look of the age-old Mali weave. Prices range from $250 for an entry-level maple drum to around $700 for a custom model.

Y **(541) 593-6119,** **www.handmaderhythm.com.**

Faster Than A Speeding Bullet?

Pacific Super Rack Drum Rack

Pacific calls their new Super Rack drum rack the "Rack Of Steel," because it features 1½"-diameter stainless-steel tubing and a series of newly designed, modular, two-way clamps. According to the company, the heavy-duty, die-cast clamps and matching memory locks combine with "the superior gripping ability of stainless-steel tubes" to provide "maximum security and stability without sacrificing versatility or consistency."

Unique features of the Super Rack include cross bar connector clamps that come with a matching, interlocking memory lock, plus the added reliability of a Techlock drumkey screw. The non-slip rubber feet include built-in, drumkey-activated, adjustable spurs.

The Main Super Rack pack includes a 42" curved bar, two T-leg assemblies, connectors, and two each of the standard and adjustable V-Clamp rack clamps that can be used to hold toms, cymbal, and accessory arms (sold separately). The Side Super Rack pack comes with a 36" straight bar, a short T-leg, connectors, and two standard V-clamps. A complete assortment of component bars, clamps, arms, and holders is available. Y **(805) 485-6999,** **www.pacificdrums.com.**

Just What You Want To Hear

Etymotic Research ER-6 Isolator Earphones

Weighing less than half an ounce, ER-6 Isolator Earphones from Etymotic Research are designed to match the acoustic response of the open ear. The company claims that ER-6 earphones are surpassed in fidelity and smoothness of response only by their ER-4 Micro-Pro reference-quality earphones (which are much more expensive).

In addition to their sonic performance, the ER-6's soft eartips seal the ear canal to provide 15-20 dB of sound isolation. As such they may prove a valuable—and affordable—means of combining hearing protection and in-ear monitoring. They list for $139.

Y **(847) 228-0006,** **www.etymotic.com.**

Something For The Youngsters

Yamaha Revised Student Percussion Kits

Ideas from teachers, parents, and students have been incorporated into the SPK-250 Student Bell Kit and SCK-300 Student Combo Kit from Yamaha. The kits start on F instead of G, reducing confusion for beginning players using accidentals to find C. The absence of note names on the tone bars allows for realistic practice and performance, while adjustable music racks hold single sheets as well as books. Both instruments include ABS resin end pieces (making them resilient against accidental falls) and X-style stands to facilitate quick set-up and tear-down. The SPK-250 ($275) includes a backpack style bag; the SCK-300 ($475) has a rolling case with retractable handle. Y **(616) 940-4900,** **www.yamaha.com/band.**

And What's More

Spider pine is the newest addition to the selection of available Exotic finishes for **Drum Workshop** drums. The spectacular web-like finish of this native American wood is offered in a choice of brilliant colors as an outer veneer over DW's all-birch or all-maple shells.

In addition, DW Edge and Craviotto snare drums will now feature DW's new Delta ball-bearing snare throw-off and TrueTone handcrafted snare wires. The adjustable Delta throw-off incorporates the smoothness and locking abilities of internal ball bearings for "virtually effortless yet completely reliable operation." TrueTone custom snare wires are made from a high-grade steel alloy attached to brass end-clips. DW states that the wires' consistency and quality "offer superior tone and response." Y **(805) 485-6999,** **www.dwdrums.com.**

Meinl has replaced their Marathon entry-level cymbal series with a new series called, simply, MCS (Meinl Cymbal Set). The MCS series includes a 14" hi-hat, a 16" crash, and a 20" ride, all made from B8 sheet bronze. Each set comes in a prepacked box for convenience and consistency.

On the percussion side, **Meinl** has developed a new line of bags to provide your instrument with dependable protection and to make transporting your instruments as carefree as possible. All of these new bags are constructed with heavy-duty padded black nylon and reinforced stitching. They are equipped with a double-slide zipper, adjustable and comfortable shoulder straps, a carrying grip, and an additional large external pocket. They are available in black only. Y **(818) 886-3465,** **www.meinle.de.**

ClearSonic's LID Systems are designed to be used with the company's A5-6 or larger panels to substantially reduce sound that would normally escape up and out of a drum-booth enclosure. A lightweight yet sturdy telescoping aluminum bar supports the Sorber LID panels or the optional clear acrylic LID panels. AX12 Height Extenders are recommended to provide an extra 12" of headroom (6½' total). Y **(800) 888-6360,** **www.clearsonic.com.**

The Drum-A-Long Drumset Practice Pad Kit by **Rhythmic Magic** has a new design for greater efficiency and visual appeal. The portable practice aid is priced under $30. Y **(661) 245-5628,** **www.drumalong.com.**

Pacific's SX Series includes a wide range of all-maple accessory drums designed to offer a choice of sizes and sounds at affordable prices. The drums come in a natural lacquer finish and include eleven models ranging from 4x10 ($238) to 8x14 ($294). Y **(805) 485-6999,** **www.pacificdrums.com.**

TreeWorks Chimes' Double Row Multi-Tree incorporates chimes, a triangle, and a finger cymbal in a convenient single unit. Based on the popularity of the company's single-row version, the new double-row chimes have forty-three aluminum/titanium alloy bars that are polished and tempered "for vibrant tone." Each bar is hand-tied to the black walnut mantle with braided cord for strength. The hand-bent 4" steel triangle has a satin chrome finish; the finger cymbal is sand-cast bronze. An 8" symphonic-grade stainless-steel triangle beater is included. List price is $220. Y **(877) 372-1601,** **www.treeworkschimes.com.**

Universal Percussion has packaged three popular models of its **Wuhan** Shining S series of professional cymbals into an attractive and affordable box set. Included are a pair of 14" hi-hats, a 16" crash, and a 20" medium-heavy ride—all hand-hammered for exceptional tone and hand-buffed to a gleaming shine. Also included is a Wuhan-logo cymbal bag. Y **(800) 282-0110,** **www.universalpercussion.com.**

AKG Acoustics' *Mic Check* enables potential users to compare and contrast AKG microphones with various features and prices. This free enhanced audio CD can be played in a standard CD player or as a CD-ROM and includes eighty-nine separate tracks. When played as a CD-ROM in computers, *Mic Check* also provides commentary from producers and engineers, as well as details on the AKG products used on each track. The CD is available from AKG dealers and online. Y **(615) 620-3800,** **www.akgusa.com.**

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RECORDINGS

rating scale poor 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 classic

8 Pearl Jam Riot Act (Epic)

Now appearing on his second Pearl Jam studio record, **MATT CAMERON** has been fully integrated into the group. He even wrote or co-wrote some of this largely mid-tempo LP's best songs. The drummer's "You Are," on which he also plays effect-laden guitar, breaks hypnotic new ground for Pearl Jam, and just happens to contain some of rock's fattest drum tones ever. Throughout the dark, Zeppelin-y *Riot Act*, Cameron strikes the perfect balance between playing for the tune and whipping up unexpected fills, like the torrent at the end of "Save You." He also reminds us of his special touch with odd time signatures. **Michael Parillo**

8 Shadows Fall

The Art Of Balance (Century Media)

There's good reason why Shadows Fall have shared the stage with Slayer and Pantera at Japan's Beast Feast and have scaled *CMJ*'s Loud Rock chart: The Massachusetts quintet offers tuneful and thoroughly dynamic extreme metal. Their third album, *The Art Of Balance*, is their most varied set yet, blending Judas Priest-like melodies, overwhelming death metal, poignant acoustica ("Casting Shade"), and art-rock (a cool cover of Pink Floyd's "Welcome To The Machine") in a way that makes the album's title more than fitting. Throughout, drummer **JASON BITTNER** does a killer job juggling numerous signatures with flair, while his jaw-dropping kick and furious fills make this one helluva "drum" record. **Jeff Perlah**

6 King Crimson Happy With What You Have To Be Happy With (Discipline Global Mobile/Sanctuary)

This scattered EP, 34 minutes of sketches, alternate edits, and instrumental bits preceding Crimson's upcoming LP, *The Power To Believe*, qualifies as "for hardcore fans only." There are treats, however, like the acoustic "Eyes Wide Open" and live shredder "Larks' Tongues In Aspic (Part IV)." **PAT MASTELOTTO** continues to prove that though his gifts are subtler than some of his KC predecessors', he can flip a beat around with the best of 'em. Pat plays some tasteful, understated percussion too. But still, it might be best to just save up for the full-length release. This one doesn't quite hold together. **Michael Parillo**

9 Brad Mehldau Largo (Warner Bros.)

Pianist Mehldau shakes up the jazz world with this starkly beautiful instrumental music devoid of conventional swing. From the opening dirge-like ballad, **MATT CHAMBERLAIN**'s backbeat looms as large in the mix as Mehldau's sparse piano, as his left hand buzzes, lending new meaning to the notion of comping. On a rendition of—get ready—Radiohead's "Paranoid Android," Chamberlain and **JIM KELTNER** build masterfully from calm to anarchy. On "Dear Prudence," it's Keltner at his loose and frisky best, supporting the implicit vocal, "Won't you come out to play?" Mehldau's usual drummer, **JORGE ROSSY**, is equally at home shaping a new jazz. **T. Bruce Wittet**

8 Michel Camilo Triangulo (Telarc)

HORACIO "EL NEGRO" HERNANDEZ has proven himself many times over as having amazing chops, but it's his thoughtful musicality that keeps him working. Negro's licks are secondary to his sensitive accompaniment on this outstanding Latin-jazz trio recording. Unlike in the early heavy-hitting Camilo trios with Dave Weckl and Joel Rosenblatt on drums, Horacio's integrated use of percussion and drumset flavors the music, as opposed to bringing it to a boil. There is still plenty of room for technical fireworks from Horacio, though, in Camilo's arrangements of "Mr. C.I.," "Anthony's Blues," and "Descarga For Tito (Puente)." The final track, "dotcom-bustion" (co-written by Horacio) is an all-inclusive exhibition of Horacio's percussionist/drummer talents in full swing. **Mike Haid**

SIGNIFICANT REISSUES

Funkadelic

The reissue of four classic Funkadelic albums from 1976 through 1981 shows why the only band to ever give Frank Zappa competition was also the sleaziest roadshow on the planet. Funkadelic took the funk of Sly Stone and warped it with hilarious rock energy. It's hard now to appreciate how arresting *Hardcore Jollies*, *One Nation Under A Groove*, *Uncle Jam Wants You*, and *The Electric Spanking Of War Babies*—and the drumming on them—were during the prog rock–dominated era. But you can still hear Funkadelic's radical big-bottomed essence. There is a revolving cast of drummers, including **DENNIS CHAMBERS**, **SLY STONE**, **JEROME BRAILEY**, **TIKI FULWOOD**, and **TYRONE LAMPKIN**. The drumming is largely of the in-the-pocket variety, and the bizarre lyrics are as amusing as the floppy '70s drum tuning. "Cosmic Slop" twirls over innovative funk rock rhythms, "Lunchmeatphobia" and "Grooveallegiance" set the template for modern funk drumming, "Field Maneuvers" wails with hi-hat/tom interplay and odd

7 Akira Tana Secret Agent Men (Sons Of Sound)

Their mission, should they decide to accept it: play old spy themes with swing and soul. Mission Possible. **AKIRA TANA**'s sextet pulls it off with fun retro-cool sans gimmickry. Once again teamed with supremo bassist **Rufus Reid**, Tana's drumming leads the pack with nimble touch and urgent groove. Setting this apart from previous Tana/Reid CDs is the inspired addition of **Lonnie Smith**'s sumptuous, grooving B-3 setting the tone. It's also exciting hearing Tana joined by a percussionist, the fiery **CHUGGY CARTER**, bringing out the tight, compositional side in the leader's kit work. Case closed. **Jeff Potter**

6 Drums & Tuba Mostly Ape (Righteous Babe)

The title may suggest that the music within is brutish and unpolished, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Granted, drummer **TONY NOZERO** and guitarist **Neal McKeeby** each keep their respective sounds rather raw, but that isn't to say that this music is off-the-cuff. With repeated listens, you'll hear just how structured these tunes are. Nozero often locks into the bloated bottom end blown by tuba player **BRIAN WOLFF** and expertly switches gears to accommodate the herky-jerky nature of some of the cuts. Sometimes he kicks out a '60s James Brown R&B groove, at others he lays down a rock-style backbeat, solidifying the band's quasi alternative rock-funk vibe. While this CD may not be for everyone, it will make for a delightful surprise for some. **Will Romano**

7 Smashing Pumpkins Earphoria (Virgin)

Delving through the early Pumpkins catalog, *Earphoria* serves as an exceptional reminder of just how great Chicago's seminal alternative rock act was on stage. Among the notable cuts here is the awesome, electric version of "Disarm," with **JIMMY CHAMBERLAIN**'s full kit plowing alongside the guitar assault, sounding just as fresh and bracing today as it did a decade ago. Chamberlain's delicate ride patterns and constant hi-hat chicks are in full form throughout *Earphoria*. The only drawback is the sound of some of the live recordings, which are plagued by heavy mix compression. But don't let that deter you from scoping a remarkable collection of groundbreaking Pumpkins material. **Waleed Rashidi**

6 Authority Zero A Passage In Time (Lava/Atlantic)

Performing punk rock inches within the likes of Pennywise, Sublime, and Rancid, Arizona's Authority Zero isn't really breaking any new ground, and perhaps that's not their intention. On their Lava debut, drummer **JIM WILCOX** lays his double-timed skate punk kicks with deft precision, slamming to a halt and comfortably switching his stance in an instant. "Lying Awake" finds Wilcox rowing through the gearbox, starting from the act's staple rapid punk, to 311-esque breakdowns to straight-up third-wave ska, ending back on a lightning-quick speed metal blast beat—all within the span of three and a half minutes. Kudos to such a versatile and adaptable performance. **Waleed Rashidi**

7 Charged Particles Sparks (Bopo)

6 Hip Bones Threedom (Groosion)

From the subtle pulse of "Peladon" to the offbeat drive of "Eleventh Commandment," **JON KROSNICK**'s drumming for Charged Particles is an integral part of this group's sound. A solid jazz fusion album with some Latin and light funk tinges, memorable tunes give the group room to play. (www.chargedparticles.com)

Hip Bones lie somewhere between jam band and jazz, playing funky music with an open sax/bass/drums format. **ROBIN TOLLESON** lays down laid-back grooves throughout, and takes advantage of the opportunities to play around the bass in this sparse trio format. Check out the remake of Cream's "Sunshine Of Your Love" for an example. (cdbaby.com/hipbones) **Martin Patmos**

7 Sparta Wiretap Scars (Dreamworks)

The quirky start to Sparta's Wiretap Scars is quite deceiving; just wait 20 seconds. This is full-on angst rock, and drummer **TONY HAJJAR** has the chops to keep the anxiety churning. Moving from softly side-sticking to smashing the crash, Hajjar easily changes musical emotions with the flick of his wrist. Big kick, fat "up in the mix" snare, and monster toms are all here. And the tempos are just as moving as the music. When lead singer **Jim Ward** is screaming, Hajjar is on top of the beat; and when the moment is pensive, so is Hajjar, laying back and letting the song breath. Try jamming along with this one in your headphones! **Fran Azzarto**

PSYCHING OUT

8 Sound Tribe Sector Nine Seasons 01 (Sacred Sound Ascension)

8 Ozric Tentacles Live: At The Pongmasters Ball (Snapper Music)

These two double live CDs, while sharing similarities, are seemingly worlds apart. Sound Tribe Sector 9's seamless flow of spacey instrumental music chirps away with the sounds of winding, introspective guitar lines, ethereal keys, and the clatter of a techno-world beat rhythm section. In the tunes "A Gift For Gaia," "Ramone & Emiglio," and "Jebez," drummer **ZACH VELMER** and percussionist **JEFFREE LERNER** so effortlessly churn out chattering beats, it's as if they're guided by a spirit of an all-knowing and all-powerful musical deity. And when the duo plays devil's advocate by applying rhythmic tension, it only adds to this record's near-mystical quality. (www.sts9.com)

Like their American counterparts, the British band Ozric Tentacles dares to play in an extended, jam-like format. That, however, is where the comparisons end. OT spins a more hard-edged, guitar-driven psychedelic form of instrumental rock that takes a path straight to the jugular. Drummer **SCHOO** (aka Stuart Fisher), a relative newcomer, crowds the canvas with gutsy fusion-like flourishes that complement the chiming flute passages, manic guitar solos, and whirling keyboard runs. Even amid all of this craziness, Schoo and bassist **Zia** always keep things swimming along nicely and manage to root songs like "The Domes Of G'bal" and "Pyramidion" in a dub-reggae feel. This is a great career retrospective from an under-appreciated band. **Will Romano**

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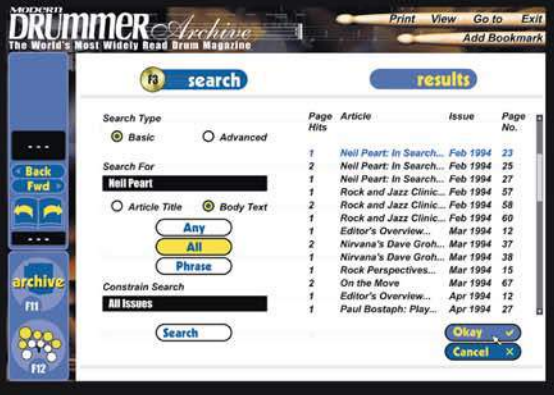

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BOOKS

8 Workin' Drums: 50 Solos For Drumset by Ben Hans (Hal Leonard)

level: intermediate, $9.95

Workin' Drums is the perfect supplemental book for the intermediate drummer who needs to spice up his or her everyday workout. Chock-full of fun yet challenging grooves and solos, each of the 63 pages is concise, easy to read, and extremely inspirational. Starting out with a solo featuring a simple kick, snare, and cymbal beat, *Workin' Drums* progresses smoothly to solos featuring sixteenth notes, flams, and triplets. Dynamics are always used to help create a sense of musicality, and the author has included numbered measures and forgiving tempo markings. Most lessons are based on a 4/4 rock 'n' roll feel, yet Hans does not forget to include jazz, odd time signatures, and even a reggae solo. *Workin' Drums* is the kind of book any drummer would love to work through. **Fran Azzarto**

8 Hard Bop Academy: The Sidemen Of Art Blakey And The Jazz Messengers by Alan Goldsher (Hal Leonard)

level: all, $23.50 (hard cover)

It's clear why Blakey's a drumming great. But beyond the thunderous swing, *Hard Bop* also offers us backstage insight into Blakey's stature as a great leader. Author Goldsher offers an informal survey, interviewing thirty notable Messenger alumni. The sidemen recount their tenure under Blakey's tough-love tutelage. Famed for spotting young talent, then honing them into contenders, Blakey would later sever the fledglings from the nest when it was "time to fly." Enjoyable and edifying, Goldsher's mix of oral history and relaxed prose honors the community Blakey built and provides an inspiring sampling of the master's gems of musical/life wisdom. **Jeff Potter**

5 Killer Grooves: Favorite Grooves From The World's Greatest Drummers (Carl Fischer)

level: intermediate to advanced, $24.95

How could a book that promotes downright nasty grooves favored by the likes of Jack DeJohnette, David Garibaldi, Stanton Moore, Dave Weckl, Terri Lynne Carrington, Manu Katché, and others leave us so cold? In this day and age, when technology is a great (and increasingly expected) learning tool, *Killer Grooves'* lack of an accompanying CD hampers its value. Some of us will be thrilled to spend hours poring over this workbook. Others will wish for recorded examples of the work discussed. As it stands, and for its price, this offering could and should have been a multi-dimensional, multimedia resource. **Will Romano**

VIDEO

7 Complete Drum Workout by Pat Petrillo

level: intermediate to advanced, $29.95

This self-produced instructional video focuses on many variations of syncopated funk grooves. Petrillo begins with a collection of rudimental sticking exercises and then advances into groove patterns with a series of bass drum exercises. The author offers a nice selection of ghost note, beat displacement, and fill ideas that are all very user-friendly. Most of Petrillo's technique is based on the styles of Steve Gadd, Weckl, Chambers, etc. Included here are live band performances featuring Petrillo using the techniques covered in the video. There's also a cameo appearance by Maryland Drum craftsman Keith Larsen, who describes Petrillo's custom-made kit in detail. A supplementary workbook with CD can be purchased separately. The workbook is helpful for working out the more complex groove and fill ideas, though with a price tag of $24.95 for the book/CD and $29.95 for the video, this makes for a pricey package. **Mike Haid**

DVDs

9 Zoro: The Commandments Of R&B Drumming (Warner Bros.)

level: all, $39.95

This DVD acts like a dose of rhythmic medicine for the mind, body, and soul. Zoro demonstrates many different R&B rhythms such as half-swung shuffles, New Orleans second-line beats, and 8th-note funk patterns. Watching our host execute hi-hat, ride cymbal, and kick drum calisthenics while he plays along with classic tracks by James Brown, The Meters, Earth Wind & Fire, and others will motivate you to disown those lazy-ass licks and get a brand new bag. *The Commandments* includes, in its entirety, Zoro's recent three-part VHS series, plus extra features and performance footage. Informative interviews by fellow drumming ace Russ Miller and the concise history of R&B music, narrated by Zoro, puts this over the top. A great investment. **Will Romano**

8 Snare Drum Basics by Bob Breithaupt (Hudson Music)

level: beginner to advanced, $14.95

The 35-minute *Snare Drum Basics* is exactly what the title implies: a no-frills look at the essentials of snare drum performance. Breithaupt speaks slowly and clearly in an easy-to-follow format that features various stick grips, basic drum strokes, and dynamics, and discusses the ever popular Moeller sticking technique. Also covered are the basic rudiments, using the snare rim for sounds, tuning, and snare drum pitch. This DVD would be very helpful to band directors and drum instructors in getting their drum students off to a proper start. **Mike Haid**

8 Making Music by Victor Wooten & Carter Beauford (Hudson Music)

level: intermediate to advanced, $29.95

Two of the most recognized names in today's bass and drumming scenes come together to set you straight on what it takes to communicate, musically and verbally, in the studio. Dave Matthews drummer Carter Beauford is put to the test in a revealing look at the thought process of creating drum parts for a couple of technically challenging tunes by bass master Victor Wooten. If you've ever wondered what a professional recording session is like, then you may enjoy this lengthy (177 minutes) DVD. Also included is a masterclass and a bass solo from Wooten and a 30-minute interview with Beauford. **Mike Haid**

To order any of the books or videos reviewed in this month's *Critique*, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call BooksNow at (800) BOOKS-NOW (266-5766) or surf to www.clicksmart.com/moderndrummer. (A handling charge may be added, according to product availability.)

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Bob Marley & The Wailers *Exodus*

Carlton Barrett (dr, perc), Bob Marley (vcl, gtr, perc), Aston "Familyman" Barrett (bs, gtr, perc), Tyrone Downie (kybd, perc, vcl), Alvin "Seeco" Patterson (perc), Julian "Junior" Marvin (gtr), I Threes (vcl)

Natural Mystic • So Much Things To Say • Guiltiness • The Heathen • Exodus • Jamming • Waiting In Vain • Turn Your Lights Down Low • Three Little Birds • One Love / People Get Ready

There's a point in "Natural Mystic," the lead-off track of *Exodus*, where we hear an almost subsonic bass drum note accent (on the 1, of course). It's a subtle touch, no doubt, but an effective one, and a telling one.

Six months prior to the release of *Exodus*, Bob Marley had been shot in Jamaica in an apparent murder attempt. The reggae king wisely left for England while things chilled at home, and began recording *Exodus* as the press ate up the story, building anticipation for the new album.

Recording a long player outside of Jamaica—and on 24-track—for the first time, The Wailers were given ample opportunity to take their sound to new levels of sophistication. They didn't waste the opportunity. The band's smash American crossover, *Exodus* features several classic cuts, including "Jamming," "The Heathen," and the title track, each of which is brimming with invention, soul, and big, open sonic spaces.

Drummer Carlton Barrett's beats are some of the most profound ever recorded. Steady, playful, dramatic, teasing, Carly's licks of course cannot be separated from the rest of the instruments here. Zen-like in its all-for-one/one-for-all axiom, reggae music refuses to be analyzed in parts. Still, close inspection of Barrett's kit playing is research worthy of a college degree.

Island reissued *Exodus* last year as an expanded double-disc set. Featuring alternate versions, several live cuts, and some great sessions produced by reggae legend Lee Perry, the Deluxe edition is required listening for any drummer who truly wants to understand the essence of this timeless music.

Adam Budofsky

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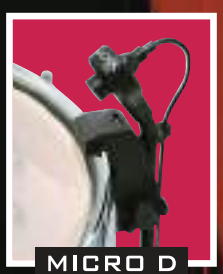
AUDIX CAPTURES IT



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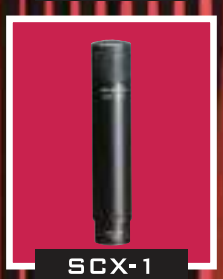

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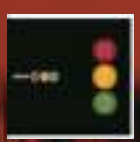

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2002 Montreal Drum Fest

The 2002 Montreal Drum Fest was held Friday, November 8 through Sunday, November 10 in Pierre Mercure Hall in downtown Montreal, Quebec, Canada. In celebration of its tenth anniversary, this year's Drum Fest featured many of the most popular artists from previous shows, along with some exciting new drumming talents.

Friday, November 8

Friday's concert opened with a performance by Emmanuelle Caplette (right) and Ronny Lessard—each a Quebec provincial drum corps champion. Playing on marching snares and timp-toms, the two talented drummers combined humor with astounding rudimental skills.

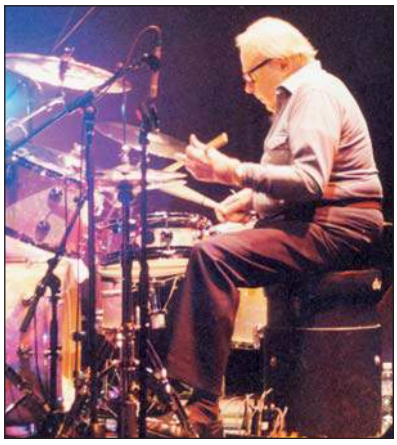
The star of Friday's show was legendary studio and touring drummer Omar Hakim. Omar began with a demo of the Roland V-Drums kit, explaining how he uses it for composition and recording purposes. Then he stepped to his Pearl acoustic kit, from which he introduced his crack fusion/funk band: Special EFX's Chieli Minucci (guitar) and Jay Rowe (keyboards), Gerald Brooks (bass), and Siraj Al'Hasan (sax and percussion). The band performed a variety of tunes that allowed Omar to display his dynamic style: powerful, fluid, creative, and incredibly musical.

Saturday, November 9

At the ripe old age of eighteen, Tony Royster Jr. has matured from a drumming prodigy into a musician of taste and skill. Working with a band of top Montreal musicians, Tony combined his remarkable chops with some serious pocket playing, covering tunes ranging from Billy Cobham's "Stratus" to Rufus & Chaka Khan's "Tell Me Something Good." And good it was.

Virtual Max combines the drumkit talents of Pierre Dragon with the mallet skills of Danny Pancaldi and Patrice Charbonneau (playing four malletKATs and a set of vibes between them). Spanning the musical textures of early Genesis, Ennio Morricone, ELP, and Stravinsky, this outfit is unlike any percussion trio you've ever heard.

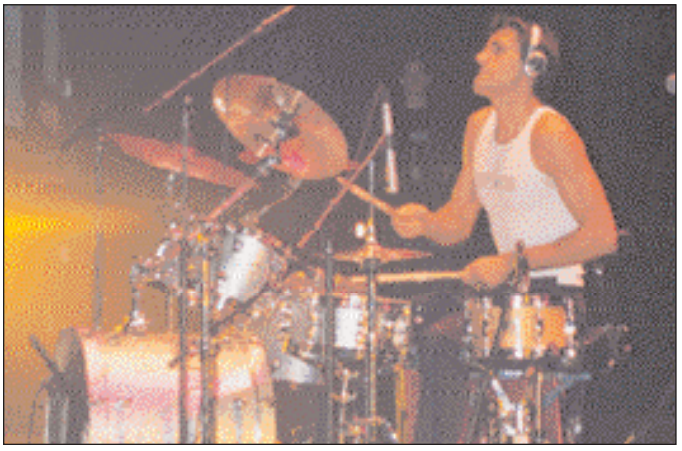
Joe Morello entered to a standing ovation. When things settled down, Joe applied his artistic mastery to a selection of swing standards, accompanied by a terrific jazz quartet. Following a closing rendition of "Take Five"—with a drum solo that reaffirmed his reputation—Joe was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Drum Fest in recognition of his stature as a jazz innovator, educator, and performer. More standing, more cheering, and a demand for an encore ensued. Joe obliged with the classic "Take The A Train."



Hard on the heels of his MD Festival debut last May, Thomas Lang took his uncanny technical abilities north to Montreal—where once again he simply floored everyone in attendance. Playing with tracks and performing an extended solo, Thomas demonstrated that blazing chops and genuine musicality don't have to be musically exclusive.

The heat of the stage lights was matched by the fire of Raul Rekow (left) and Karl Perazzo. The Santana percussionists held the crowd spellbound as they sang and played together on a variety of Latin pieces. Their duets and solo performances displayed the best characteristics of Afro-Cuban percussion: They were technically astounding, deeply spiritual, and undeniably joyful.

Saturday closed with a bravura performance by Quebec's favorite son, Paul Brochu. With credits including Gino Vanelli, UZEB, Didier Lockwood, and Bela Fleck (along with countless sessions and jingles), Paul is unquestionably a "do it all" player. So he decided to, in fact, do it all in Montreal, performing on two drumsets, with two different bands—one acoustic and one electric. The music ranged from Latin jazz to blistering hard bop, and from grooving electric jazz to full-on fusion. The appreciative audience left the hall with heads shaking in wonder.



Sunday's show opened with up-and-comer Tobias Ralph, appearing at his first major drumming event. The versatile drummer (drum 'n' bass, pop, funk...even speed metal, for heaven's sake) demonstrated why he's been busy on the New York session and European touring scenes. He played with impressive dexterity, but made sure the feel was always there—especially during an extended solo that covered a lot of styles. Watch out for this guy!

Canadian drummer/author/educator Rick Gratton (left) brought audience members on stage to help contain some of his seemingly boundless energy. He then delivered a lesson on technique, timekeeping, musicality, and the sheer fun of playing drums.

Rick then introduced Paul DeLong, who "had an argument with his basement stairs" just prior to the Drum Fest, suffering a fractured left wrist in the process. Still, Paul's dedication brought him to the stage, where he performed a brief but nonetheless impressive one-handed drum solo.

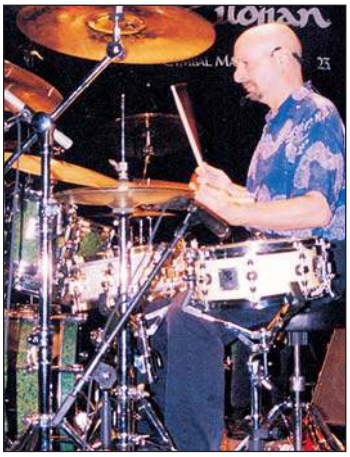
For pure enthusiasm on drums and percussion, it's hard to top Walfredo Reyes Jr. On a quick in-and-out break from a Steve Winwood session in London, Wally focused on grooves and feels on the drumkit, with and without Latin percussion. But just to give the extra nod to the Latin tip, the former Santana drummer drafted Raul Rekow as a surprise accompanist. Hands, sticks, notes...and sparks...were flying.

Four snare drums (one operated by his foot)...four hi-hats...non-sequential tom sizes...gong bass drum...incredibly complex polyrhythmic concepts...almost superhuman speed and stamina.... What does Marco Minneman do that's normal? Playing to tracks and in an extended solo, Marco took an exploratory approach to percussive sounds, rhythmic patterns, and the application of thought to the drumset. Oh yeah...and he played great, too!

T. Bruce Wittet

Modern Drummer senior editor Rick Van Horn was on hand to present MD's Editors Achievement Award to Ralph Angelillo (left) and Serge Gamache (right) in recognition of their ten years as producers of the Montreal Drum Fest. Other presentations to Ralph and Serge were made by Zildjian (a framed cymbal), Sonor (an engraved snare drum), and the production staff of the Fest itself (two cymbals signed by the staff, the performing artists, and the sponsors).

The inimitable Steve Smith blended clinic with concert in his appearance. Starting off on a solo snare, Steve hummed a swing melody ("Remember, I'm a drummer, not a singer...") while demonstrating nifty brushwork. Then he brought out the members of Vital Information to play a variety of musical styles, from complex fusion to New Orleans second-line grooves. But it was Steve's solo performance of "The Drum Also Waltzes"—during which he delivered a verbal lesson on polyrhythms (on a headset mic') while playing figures from three beats to ten beats over the 3/4 ostinato—that most impressed the audience. They stood up and cheered when Steve—the eternal student—was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award.



The Montreal Drum Fest is produced by Musicien Québécois, Inc., with the collaboration of Musi-Technic. Sponsors for this year's show included Alternate Mode, Aquarian, AKG, Attack, Drumframe, Drum Workshop, Evans, johnnyraBB, Korg, Latin Percussion, Mapex, Meinl, Paiste, Pearl, Pro-Mark, Regal Tip, Remo, Roland, Sabian, Shure, Sonor, Tama, The Mallet Company, Vater, Vic Firth, Yamaha, and Zildjian.

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Richie Gajate-Garcia
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Omar Hakim
Taylor Hawkins
Horacio Hernandez
Billy "Thunder" Mason
Harvey Mason
Alex Meza
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E-Drum Expo LA

The World Series isn't the only place in California where you can see a home run. Roland hit one with its E-Drum Expo LA held on Sunday, November 3, 2002, at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium. With co-sponsorship by *Modern Drummer* and johnnyraBB Drumsticks, the event showcased Roland's complete line of electronic percussion products.

Starting at 10:00 A.M., attendees had a chance to get hands-on experience with Roland's e-drum products. On hand to provide a professional demonstration was LA recording and touring pro **Steve DiStanislao**. Seminar sessions began at noon, conducted by **Johnny Rabb** and **Mike Snyder**.

The main event of the day was a concert featuring **Gregg Bissonette**, **Bashiri Johnson**, and **Omar Hakim**, each playing custom setups of Roland e-drum products. Gregg played to tracks from his recent *Submarine* CD. Bashiri focused on percussion applications, and encouraged attendees to "embrace the technology." Omar offered a dazzling performance on a V-Session kit, then related how he uses e-drums to re-create sounds from recordings. Roland percussion product manager **Steve Fisher** hosted the concert.

Audience member **Matthias Hahn** won a new V-Session kit in a drawing held immediately following the concert. More information about Roland e-drum products can be found at www.rolandus.com.

Story by Rick Long
Photos by Richard Newman

Johnny Rabb demonstrated house grooves on his acoustic/electronic hybrid kit.

Concert emcee (and Roland percussion product manager) Steve Fisher dazzled the crowd with his demo of the SPD-20.

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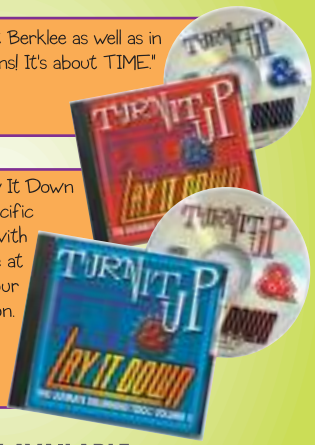
-Dan Adams,
Director of Percussion Studies



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Hollywood Custom & Vintage Drum Show

The 6th annual Hollywood Custom & Vintage Drum Show took place at the Remo Percussion Center in North Hollywood, CA, last October 5 and 6. The show—ably coordinated by Kerry Crutchfield and his new bride Patti—featured custom operations such as Mayer Bros. Drums, Drum Solo, Dunnett Classic Drums, Fever Drums, and Rocket Shells, as well as large companies like Ludwig and DW. Of particular note was the reappearance of Tempus fiberglass drums after a long absence from the market.

Ever-increasing demand for vintage drums has created a shortage of quality items, but this year's show had plenty of reasonably priced gems. Those who passed on the vintage gear had ample opportunity to peruse the many new kits, snare drums, and cymbals available for sale, or to win one of hundreds of raffle prizes. The show also featured an outstanding series of clinics, along with a live reenactment of the famous Buddy Rich/Gene Krupa drum battle.

Ed Shaughnessy got Saturday's clinic schedule rolling with a fiery performance of a song indelibly etched in the minds of many a drummer: the *Tonight Show* theme. Ever the consummate teacher, Ed spoke about the dynamics of feathering the bass drum, as well as methods for strengthening the weaker hand. Ed was sponsored by Ludwig.

Ed's clinic was followed by DW founder Don Lombardi, in tandem with John Hernandez of Oingo Boingo fame. (Both were sponsored by Drum Workshop.) Don obviously enjoyed being an educator as he demonstrated his knowledge of technique, grip, and efficient utilization of the fulcrum. John, on the other hand, performed with a band, demonstrating his deftness in a style never touched upon in Oingo Boingo: jazz.

Sunday's festivities began with a clinic by Frankie Capp, sponsored by Remo. If you've heard any '60s TV theme song, chances are you've heard Frankie. He spent little time playing, explaining, "I hate playing drums by myself. It's boring." Instead, he shared some of his history in the entertainment industry, and also discussed the importance of a drummer's role in supporting the music. Near the end of Frankie's clinic, industry legend Remo Belli joined him for some light-hearted repartee.

Funkmeister Stanton Moore closed the show with a dynamic clinic sponsored by Dunnett and Gretsch. He captivated the attention and imagination of the bustling venue with a refreshing combination of patented grooves, street beats, New Orleans music history, and an endearing stage presence.

More than anything else, the show was a great chance for drummers to get together, get to know each other, and exchange war stories and playing tips. If you have the chance to be there next October, make the trip. You won't regret it. For more photos and further information on the show, visit www.vintage-drumshow.com.

Story by Nick Amoroso
Photos by Ronn Dunnett

1) The show featured hundreds of vintage drums and drumkits for sale. 2) This rare Rogers wood Dyna-Sonic was priced at $3,200! 3. Newly returned to the marketplace, Tempus Drums had a beautiful Orange Glass Glitter kit at their booth. 4) Ed Shaughnessy and show producer Kerry Crutchfield. 5) Don Lombardi. 6) John Hernandez. 7) Jimmy Ford (as Buddy Rich) and Randy Caputto (as Gene Krupa) reenacted the famous drum battle. 8) Stanton Moore. 9) Frankie Capp.

Quick Beats

Gregg Bissonette

What are some of your favorite grooves?
James Gadson on "Express Yourself" (Charles Wright & The Watts 103rd St. Rhythm Band), Ringo Starr on "You Can't Do That" (The Beatles), Dave Grohl on "There Goes My Hero" (Foo Fighters), Danny Seraphine on "Make Me Smile" (Chicago), Jerry Gaskill on "These Shoes" (Kings X), Stewart Copeland on "Don't Stand So Close To Me" (The Police), and Gregg Errico on "Sing A Simple Song" (Sly & The Family Stone).

What are some of your favorite grooves that *you've* recorded?
Maynard Ferguson's "Be Bop Buffet," David Lee Roth's "Shyboy," Santana's "El Farol," The Mustard Seeds' "Mr. Green," Jeff Lynne and ELO's "Lonesome Lullaby," Don Henley's "Workin' It," Joe Satriani's "Friends," Matt Bissonette's "I Hate Hate," Jughead's "Paging Willie Mays," and "No Hay Parqueo," from my solo CD, *Submarine*.

What do you listen to in your car, and what car are you driving?
I drive a Ford Explorer that has a six-CD changer. The CDs in there are The Foo Fighters' *There Is Nothing Left To Lose* ("I could listen to Foo Fighters all day *every* day"), The *Spiderman* soundtrack (my four-year old son Noah *has* to hear the song "Spiderman" a hundred times a day"), The Police's *Greatest Hits*, Jimmy Branly's new solo CD (he's an amazing Afro-Cuban drummer and bassist), Vinnie Coliauta on *Live At The Baked Potato* (with The Greg Matheson Band), and The Beatles' *Rubber Soul*. The two radio stations I listen to the most in the car are Los Angeles Stations KCRW (eclectic and world-beat music) and KROQ (new rock).

If you could put an imaginary band together, who would be in it?
It would be a hard pop/rock band (a la Mustard Seeds, Kings X, Foo Fighters) with my brother Matt Bissonette on bass and lead vocals, Ty Tabor (from Kings X) on guitar and lead vocals, and Dave Grohl on guitar and lead vocals, double drumming with me at times. Actually, I already have a dream band with my brother Matt and Ty, Jughead. But adding Dave Grohl would make it even *more* of a dream. The songwriting combination would be a *blast*.

DRUM KICKS

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The 2003 **KoSA-Cuba Music Festival And Workshops** will be held this coming June 7–21 at the El Senador Hotel in Cayo Coco, Cuba. Participants will be able to choose from attending one week or the full two weeks. For more information on KoSA-Cuba, including a detailed *Modern Drummer* story and photos of last year's inaugural event, please contact Aldo Mazza at info@kosamusic.com, or visit www.kosamusic.com.

The 7th Annual Virginia Arts Festival will feature the **PANorama Caribbean Music Fest,** this coming May 9–11. The festival will feature steel bands from middle school through college level in competition, along with clinics and workshops with steel pan luminaries **Andy Narell** (at right), **Dr. Ellie Mannette,** and **Dr. Chris Tanner.** Narell and The Miami University Of Ohio Steel Band Ensemble will perform on May 11. For more information call (800) USA-FEST or visit www.usafest.org.

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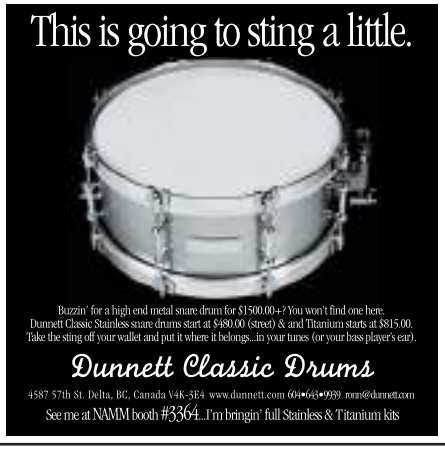

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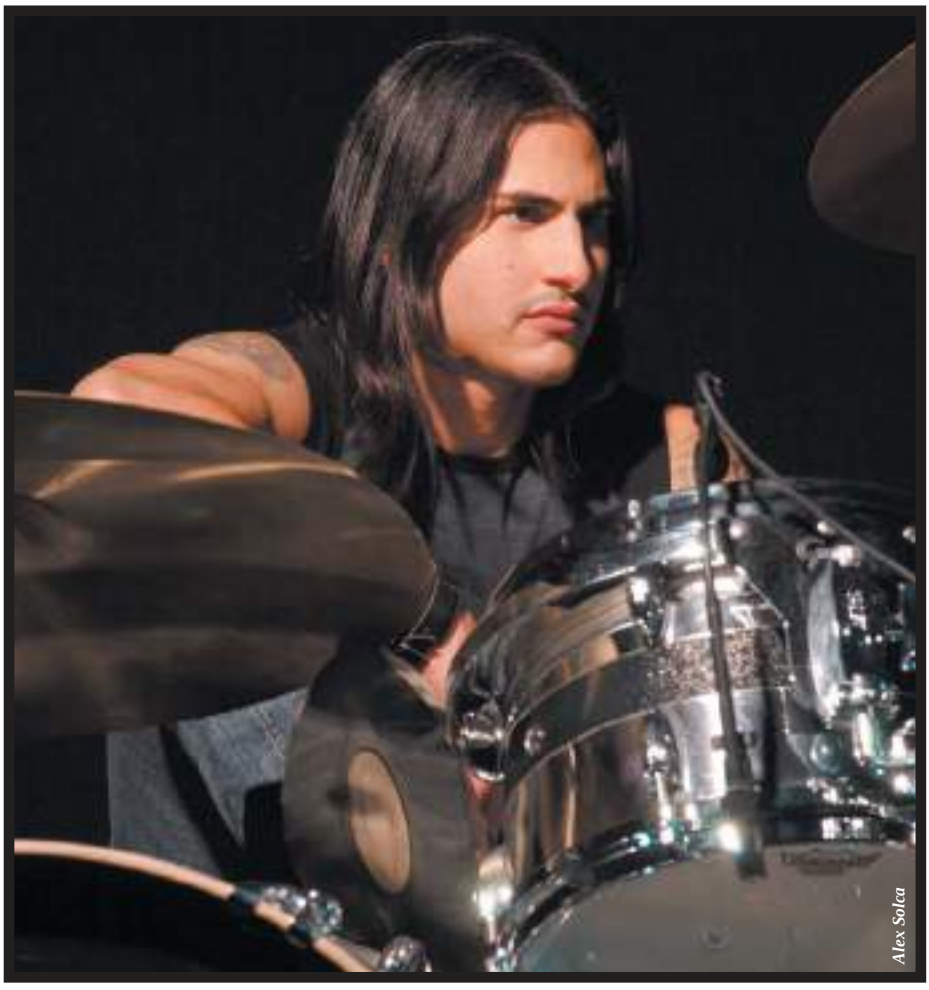

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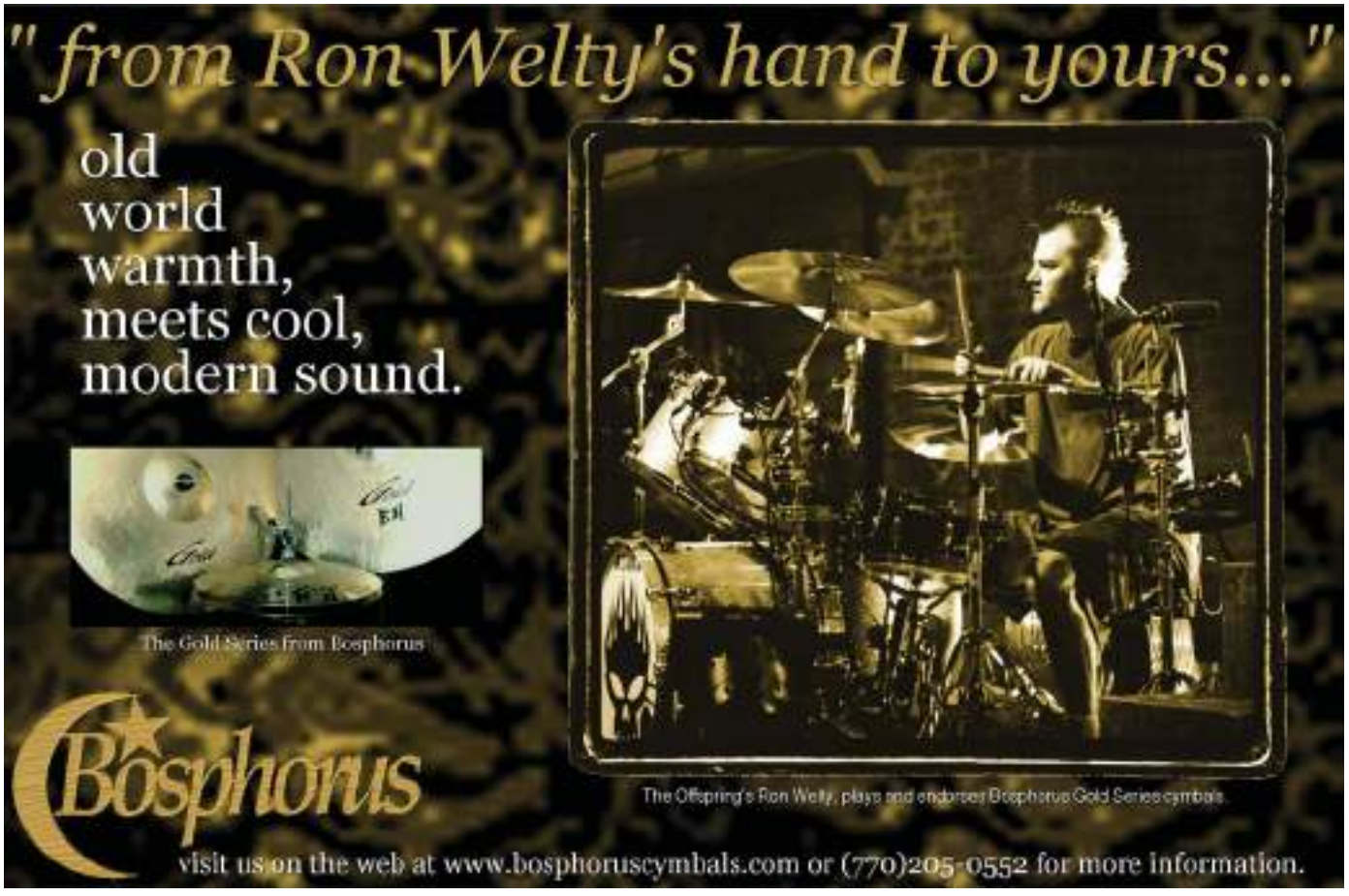

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Big And Booming

Norwegian drummer Lars Briskeby says that his drumkit "speaks for itself...loudly...a la '70s-era John Bonham or Ian Paice." The drums are 1997 Ludwig Super Classics, with 5-ply maple shells (except for the 7-ply snare drum) finished in Black Rock Onyx. They include a 16x26 bass drum, a 9x13 rack tom mounted on a snare stand, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and an 8x14 snare drum. The double-braced stands are from Pearl, as is the bass drum pedal.

The drums are fitted with Remo clear Emperor top heads and Ludwig clear heavy heads on the bottoms, except for the bass drum. It has a Ludwig Silver Dot batter and a Remo white Ambassador front head. Zildjian cymbals include two 16" A Custom crashes, a 22" Earth Ride, and a set of 14" K/Z hi-hats. Lars has also added a Vibra-Slap, chimes, and a cowbell "to spice things up."

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.

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